CHINA'S URBANIZATION DILEMMA: A STUDY ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF RURAL MIGRANT FAMILIES

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Hui Wen

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Hui Wen, Ph. D.

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Problems with urbanization in China are becoming more pressing. For decades, the government has followed the unsustainable course of first restricting rural-urban migration and then excluding rural migrants from public services in an attempt to prevent chaos in cities. With changes in the macroeconomy and migration patterns in the twenty-first century, this strategy no longer makes social or economic sense. As a result, there has been a major reorientation of policy goal in the past few years toward making temporary rural migrants into permanent urban citizens.

This dissertation examines the factors that influence migration decisions, experiences, and outcomes from the perspectives of rural migrant households in this time of "people-centered" urbanization. It builds on the body of literature that sees internal migrants in developing countries as going through a similar process of adaptation and assimilation against structural barriers. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry, I construct an explanatory framework for settlement intention, housing ownership, and access to education. The findings demonstrate the critical importance of non-economic considerations when family members are involved. Using the case study of one of the least developed provinces, I show the irreversibility of the urbanization process and the

imperative to expand economic development to include equity goals.

This dissertation contends that because both the state and migrant households in lower-tier cities have fewer choices, resources, and opportunities, dispersing migration from mega-cities as the central government is doing right now does not address the problems of poverty and exclusion among rural migrants and therefore does not constitute people-centered or high-quality urbanization as it is so proclaimed. Herein lies the dilemma. Provincial capitals and major prefectures in the less developed interior are – in a manner of speaking – the "last stop on this train", where burden-shifting is no longer viable. As such, these cities should be equally important as sites of equitable urbanization. Furthermore, their development should serve to free up mobility so that migrants have more options about where to go rather than deter it.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christine Wen is a doctoral candidate in the department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. She has been involved in many different research projects including economic development, tax policy, and natural resources. Wen has a master's degree in urban planning from Columbia University and a bachelor's degree from Princeton University. She is currently working at a nonprofit research organization in Washington, D.C.

To my parents

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The significance of rural-urban migration in contemporary China cannot be overstated – if just because of its sheer volume alone. The latest official estimate puts the number of off-farm rural migrants at 286 million, of which 137 million are found in metropolitan centers[1]. For the first time in 2011, more than half of Chinese people regularly lived in urban areas (Chan, 2011). Substantively, rural-urban migration has involved major changes in production relations, governance institutions, and regional development policies, resulting in dramatic socio-spatial transformations that could be seen and felt within and beyond the borders. Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz once famously said: "high-tech development in the United States and China's urbanization would be two key factors affecting the process of human society development in the 21st century." That and the frequent citations of it by politicians and academics are a testament to the potentially far-reaching consequences. From a theoretical standpoint, China constitutes an intriguing case: Massive, ex-socialist, and authoritarian, it boasts a governance system with a unique configuration of processes, mechanisms, and institutions that is not easily explained by any existing analytical frameworks and has produced distinct patterns and outcomes that have been the subject of much research and debate.

One of the most characteristic features of China's urbanization is the systematic exclusion of rural migrants from urban public services by means of the household

[1] National Bureau of Statistics: Migrant Monitoring Report 2018.

registration (hukou) system. Originated in the socialist era for job assignment and resource allocation – among other planning purposes – the centrally-governed hukou system imposed strict spatial delineations between administrative units, particularly along the urban-rural boundary and thereby limited people's free movement across localities. The urban-rural dualistic system reflected the divide between industrial production and agricultural production, with the latter serving a supporting function to the former. Even as marketization was underway, the essence of the hukou system was preserved to prevent population movement from getting out of control. Due to the effective implementation of this institution, China was able, for a time, to sidestep the common pitfalls of "Third World urbanization" – unemployment, slum proliferation, and so forth. As time went on, the hukou system's restrictive power on labor mobility gradually diminished under the growing force of the market, but it continued to define a person's entitlement to public resources in a particular place based on whether his or her hukou status is local or non-local and agricultural or non-agricultural – engendering a division in cities between the protected and the precarious and a labor regime founded on the exploitation of temporary migrant workers.

This method of managing urbanization did in fact contribute to rapid economic growth and lessened the immediate pressures on cities, but it was bound to run into problems when migrants began spending longer time in cities, adapting to urban living, and raising their families there. The increasing demand on social services put them at odds with the governments of receiving cities and some of the existing residents who are afraid of resource dilution. Public debates on the issues related to burgeoning migrant communities intensified as more citizens became aware of the injustice toward

a people who provided the necessary labor for cities to function. Economists pointed out that China was in danger of falling into the middle-income trap as an export-oriented economy that the country has adopted and so depended on had run its course. In response, the national leadership called for a shift in developmental priority from the narrow focus on economic performance to broader considerations for livelihood improvement and balanced growth. In 2014, State Council unveiled a plan titled *New Urbanization Plan 2014-2020* (hereafter referred to as NUP), outlining ambitious objectives to be achieved in six years and heralding a new phase of "people-centered" urbanization, in which the urban integration of rural migrants moved to the top of China's developmental agenda (China Development Research Foundation, 2013).

It was against this backdrop of rapid and transformative changes in China's economy and society that this dissertation research was carried out. Institutionally, the hukou barrier along the urban-rural line has become much more porous, meaning that a rural registration status is no longer as inferior as it was in the past: For many families, it is actually preferable to hang on to it. The governance of the hukou system has also decentralized. Because cities are mostly free to formulate their own policies, there are large variations from place or place, and implementation within a place is often uneven as well depending on the specific departments or agencies that hold such power. On the other end of things, migrants have over time adapted to the restrictive policy settings and to varying degrees of success learned to mobilize personal resources via mostly non-state networks, reconfigured urban spaces through their presence, and effected limited progressive changes through their unique form of politics. New demographic patterns emerged as a result: According to survey data, the number of dependents in the

city has been steadily on the rise as more families decided to migrate together for the benefit of the next generation[2]. In the larger picture, emergent, rapidly-growing cities are becoming more competitive against more established cities as migrant destinations[3] (Chan, 2010). Countless reports of labor shortages and cities fighting for migrant workers with incentives demonstrated that both migration patterns and power dynamics have shifted.

These developments have important theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. It is more imperative than ever that rural migrants be treated not as victims of the structure but active agents who vote with their feet, even as the extent of agency remains widely varied among them (Wang and Wu, 2010). Similarly, urban citizenship needs to be reconceptualized in a way that takes us beyond the hukou/non-hukou binary: Reforms to the system have allowed some rural people with resources and connections to access city services without the need for formal hukou conversion; in other words, unequal treatment for different segments within the migrant population is more prevalent. Data collection and analysis should focus more on the household and community level to better understand the nuances in migration choices. The selection of sites should expand beyond a few large metropolitan centers to include secondary cities and towns. As for policy, a fundamentally different approach to migration governance that does not rely on the short-sighted strategy of subsidizing labor

[2] China Institute for Income Distribution: Chinese Household Income Project Survey 2002, 2007, 2013; National Bureau of Statistics: Migrant Monitoring Reports 2009-2017.
[3] Hartley, Kris. "The Rise of China's Inland Cities". *The Diplomat*. May 2, 2015. Accessed Apr. 15, 2019. https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/the-rise-of-chinas-inland-cities.

reproduction using rural resources is needed now that the new generation of migrants becomes increasingly disconnected from their country roots.

These considerations have led me to formulate the following main research question:

> "How do the varied household resources/characteristics and contextual factors shape rural-to-urban migration experiences, choices, and outcomes?"

I am particularly interested in the implied geographical aspect in this question. The various regions in China are under distinct developmental circumstances. Crudely speaking, the western region is underdeveloped relative to the eastern region. As a migrant-sourcing region with under-sized cities, the western region as a whole has not received much attention as urbanization sites and migration destinations. This needs to be fixed given the broader sweeping changes outlined above. I postulate that at least some parts of the western region exhibit different migration dynamics than what is commonly portrayed in the eastern region in some important ways. To better understand the interplay between agency and structure in the migration process, this main question can be further broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. How does the Chinese state respond to the increasing demand on urban services due to migration at the national, provincial, and local level?

   Given the ponderous role of the state, the first stop is to understand state responses to the challenges of rural-urban migration. It is important to distinguish which policies are helping to move forward in the quest for the full

incorporation of migrants, and which ones are a step back. For example, the NUP is an example of national guidelines that aim to reallocate resources among people and localities; provincial governments can formulate hukou policies such as removing the agricultural/non-agricultural distinction to make it easier for rural residents within a prefecture to access urban services; local governments often have the authority and discretion to exclude certain people from public education and affordable housing based on their documents.

2. How do social and developmental policies affect the geographies of migration? There is a geographical component to urbanization policies at the national level that is likely to produce complex interactions with existing the patterns of migration flows and regional relations. In an attempt to rectify the severe regional inequality and the strain on large cities due to high volumes of in-migration, the central government has been encouraging the development of small towns and cities in underdeveloped regions since the late 1990s. Many interior provinces became the recipients of massive infrastructural investment, driving urbanization. I posit that the outcomes in these places are likely to differ from those in large, advanced cities: there may be additional or unfamiliar challenges due to resource constraints as well as opportunities for more equitable development due to more local and short-distance migration.

3. Which factors enable or hamper a rural household's intention and ability to settle down in cities?

These could be at the household level – such as resources in rural areas, resources in the city, education attainment, future plans and aspirations, etc. – or at the meso-level, including labor market conditions, wage differentials, housing prices, social policies, and other place-based characteristics. This question focuses on personal choices and motivations as they are influenced by the settings. I postulate that because people with fewer resources are less mobile, migrants in poor provinces might be more inclined to move to and live in cities that are closer to them as long as they can afford to; other factors matter less. Although the hukou system adds a layer of insecurity, but it does not stop many rural migrant families from making a life in the city.

4. What determines social citizenship and mobility for migrant households?

   This question looks at urbanization outcome variables (housing, welfare, education) at the household level. Having access to these resources is critical to transitioning and integrating into urban life and breaking out of the cycles of poverty and precarity. This question also focuses on family and household rather than the individual worker. While the hukou system cannot stop people from coming to the cities, it is a useful mechanism for cities to selectively withhold services from migrants. On the other hand, as these outcomes vary widely among migrants, hukou status is by no means the only explanation. This is because the progress in urbanization and market transition necessitates that hukou restrictions be relaxed and made more flexible, which in turn give local governments more room to make arbitrary decisions. This also suggests that the

deeply-entrenched inequality is unlikely to be resolved even as the hukou system gets dismantled and one day eliminated.

5. How do migrant households and communities cope with and strategize around deprivation and discrimination?

   Regressive policies prevent some migrants from ever owning a home or enrolling their children in public schools in the city or becoming a formal urban resident. In response, they have created an entire self-sustaining social infrastructure and support network that are distinct from and yet, at the same time, intricately interwoven with the planned city. Informal settlements are usually under-serviced, but they offer invaluable resources to migrants; part of the reason for that is precisely their deregulation and detachment from the state apparatus. It is as much in the hukou conversions from rural to urban as in the proliferation of vulnerable yet resilient communities where urbanization happens.

This dissertation as a whole seeks to answer these questions through piecing together a variety of source materials. They are not new questions, but because the developmental conditions and circumstances have changed dramatically since then, they are worth revisiting, especially in light of NUP. The literature mainly addresses institutional impediments (structure) and household strategies (agency) simultaneously when exploring related questions (e.g. Solinger, 1999; Fan, 2008). Currently, there are a few notable debates: to what extent, and for what reasons, migrants would choose to settle down in (which) cities; the effects of local policy reforms in the areas of hukou,

welfare, affordable housing, and education on micro-level decisions about migration; and how a household's trans-local resources and financial, social, and cultural capital determine the urban livelihood and mobility of its members. These factors are the driving forces behind the changing geographies and demographics of migration. Data scarcity has resulted in inconclusive, geographically limited, or non-comparable evidence, and inadequate knowledge about these issues undermines the recognition for where and how to target policy efforts. The role of the state in migration governance is also exceedingly difficult to pin down because of the internal fragmentations, enormous differences among localities, and the multitude of actors involved.

The present research builds on and contributes to these conversations by looking beyond hukou status at alternative conceptualizations of urban citizenship and the diverse trajectories migrant households undertake to navigate around hukou restrictions. It does so through a national-level quantitative study on urban homeownership and a field study in Guizhou province – a mostly rural but rapidly-urbanizing region populated by migrants typically from the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Guizhou is a suitable site for analyzing local or intraprovincial migration with low barriers between origins and destinations, which, I argue, will become more prevalent as a mode of migration in the coming years. Despite the developmental delays, the region is picking up momentum at a time when both the urban integration of migrants and development of interior regions are major policy goals at the national level. The province has also been aggressively pursuing a sustainable development agenda. The qualitative portion of this dissertation profiles migration experiences in connection with regional economic development. As an example of social services, I investigate the role of low-fee informal

schools in integrating migrant families in the provincial capital. This interesting albeit unusual geographical choice for a case study will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of urbanization dynamics in emergent city-regions.

The conceptual framework of this dissertation is informed by three analytical approaches. The first is Solinger's (1999) observation that the lack of state support and intervention resulted in more space for migrants to self-organize and exercise their agency. This suggests that valuable lessons can be learned from interior cities in China which have fewer resources to support migrants but more tolerance for informal activities. The second is the application of theories from immigration studies (e.g. Alba and Logan, 1992) to explain the widening intra-group disparities among China's internal migrants. For example, some scholars argued that the hukou system is no longer relevant for some migrants because they have successfully adapted and achieved upward mobility without ever converting to urban hukou (Huang et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2018; Tao et al., 2015). The third is the sociological approach that treats migration decisions as not only rooted in rational, economic calculations but also emotional, sociocultural considerations which, like in new economics of migration, focuses on households rather than individuals as the appropriate units of analysis (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Constant and Massey, 2003; Fan, 2008; Du and Li, 2012; Chen and Liu, 2016). Children, for example, are a key factor shaping migration dynamics even though they contribute relatively little labor (Wang et al., 2019).

I employed mixed methods to answer my proposed research questions, beginning with a deductive regression analysis in the first stage, followed by a grounded theory approach in the second stage, to examine and construct explanations based on

narratives and observations. Quantitative analysis is necessary for testing the relationships between possible explanatory variables and outcome variables on a large geographical scale. Understanding migration dynamics, however, is also aided by a close examination of experiences, behaviors, and motivations as revealed through personal narratives. Qualitative investigation is particularly important for non-central settings such as ordinary cities and peripheral regions, which are underrepresented in country-wide surveys. The two contrasting approaches complement each other in deriving an explanatory framework that can account for the multiple dimensions of human urbanization and migration in China.

The quantitative portion uses the "China Household Finance Survey" (CHFS) conducted by the Southwest University of Economics and Finance in Chengdu, China, in 2011, 2013, and 2015. The survey is recent and rich in information, making it one of the best available datasets for analysis at the household level. I extracted the subset of rural migrants to analyze the relationship between homeownership and welfare citizenship. Since the data are not specific to the migrant population, there may be a sampling bias toward better-situated migrants. Nevertheless, descriptive summaries of key variables confirm the validity of the sample via comparison with other known sources. The results are useful for identifying significant factors that can be further examined through qualitative research.

The fieldwork, consisting of site visits, observations, interviews, and focus groups, was carried out during the summers of 2016 and 2017 in the two largest prefectural cities of Guizhou (Guiyang and Anshun) and a subset of counties, districts, towns, and villages in a large developmental zone between them. Other qualitative data

comes from government documents, media reports, and Chinese language research publications. I reached my interview participants mainly through snowball and convenience sampling. It was often necessary to be referred and introduced by mutual acquaintances to people of authority such as public officials and school administrators in order to speak with them. I began with local contacts within my personal and professional network who were in a position to refer me to a variety of human sources. Their presence during interviews made my subjects more comfortable, trusting, and forthcoming. The access to ordinary migrants was easier to gain and could be obtained without going through an intermediary. The process of recruiting family migrants usually began in and around schools. My knowledge of the local dialect facilitated my understanding and interpreting of the narratives.

My findings show that the permanent urbanization of rural migrants can occur two ways: 1) being included in urban social provisions and 2) being disconnected from the countryside and forced to rely on informal, non-state provisions. Both result in developing strong ties to city life but with different implications. For the migrants in Guiyang who came from depressed rural areas in the province, not only are there preciously few rural resources that can be leveraged, but their mobility is also hampered by limited financial and human capital. As a result, they are deeply committed to making a life in the city despite the pervasive exclusion and marginalization that they experience. The city government, in turn, has little choice but to passively accept their presence while continuing to impose stringent restrictions on who has access to the scarce city resources. While the government can maintain hukou barriers (indeed, it is almost as hard to get a hukou in Guiyang as it is in Beijing), it cannot count on

employing exclusionary measures to reduce migration pressures, because it is home to entire families of permanent migrants who have nowhere else to go. Urbanization in peripheral areas benefits primarily local migrants and educated migrants who are better able to seize what few opportunities emerging from developmental programs. Although rural interventions are easier to implement than urban ones, their area of effect appears limited.

This dissertation arrives at these findings through a series of studies on rural migrant households, to be presented in the chapters that follow. Together, they advance the central thesis: Rural-urban migration in China is taking on a more permanent and irreversible character, and more families are making the move together. At the same time, households with few resources are being crowded out of metropolitan centers by high living costs and exclusionary policies. The latter, as I see it, is a move to not just ease the pressure on first-tier cities but also reduce the overall public expenditure since smaller cities provide fewer services and quality jobs that come with benefits. Migrants pushed and confined to these less developed destinations, broadly speaking, simply do not have as many opportunities to move up the socioeconomic ladder. This is the dilemma referred to in the title: Such a form of "people-centered" urbanization is unlikely to deliver on its promise to lift more people out of poverty.

Based on this conclusion, I argue that although late-developing cities face strong pressures for rapid economic development and GDP growth, social redistribution must also be prioritized due to the specificities of their migrant demographics – local (intraprovincial), permanent, and disadvantaged. For Guizhou province, the sustainable framework is not complete without equity goals, such that economic gains do not solely

benefit large corporations and their skilled employees imported from elsewhere but also local migrants who are struggling to make ends meet at the lowest rung of the job ladder. At the national level, achieving spatially-balanced urbanization needs to be substantiated by increased aid for public services in emergent city-regions to avoid creating a permanent underclass.

This dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the current status of knowledge on China's urbanization by reviewing the literature on rural-urban migration in China and developing countries in general. This chapter serves the purposes of outlining a conceptual framework and providing the necessary background information for understanding the broader context. Certainly, such a complex topic cannot be sufficiently covered in a single chapter or even a tome, so I selectively focus on certain recent developments in, and leading up to, the phase commonly referred to as "new urbanization" which, as mentioned earlier, is characterized by a sharp re-orientation of policy priority toward human development. I review the theories of rural-urban migration developed from the Global South context as well as migration studies, reflect on the evolution of migration dynamics and governance strategies in China, and discuss the implications of the proposed citizenship reforms as part of the NUP.

Chapter 3 uses the CHFS data from 2015 – one year into the era of new urbanization – to investigate the relationship between homeownership and access to social security among rural migrant households. Following the dismantling of public housing and socialist welfare, the government encouraged city residents to purchase housing as part of asset-building, which would allow them to rely less on state welfare

and gain more access to privatized goods and services (Wang, 2016; Izuhara, 2016). While homeownership rate is high among city residents, the same cannot be said about rural migrants. For rural migrants who have no prior connections to the city, purchasing a home could be associated with commitment to living in the city, which would entail long considerations for the prospects of security and stability, as opposed to an investment decision that has little to do with other institutional or social ties to the city. If evidence in support of the former hypothesis prevails, it would suggest that policy efforts that enable long-term settlement such as broadening the social security coverage could help to improve urban homeownership rate among migrants, raise consumption, and propel urbanization.

Chapter 4 opens with migration statistics showing the rise of inland destinations and a discussion of this entails in terms of migrant incorporation and equitable development. It then presents examples of how migrants in Guizhou made decisions about migration, navigated the sea of obstacles, and developed enduring connections to cities, and how all these fit within the broader developmental context of the province. Their experiences suggest that what draws migrants to the city and keeps them there does not necessarily have to be related to some of the factors commonly thought of as contributing to migration and settlement intention – high wages, quality housing, access to public services, connections with local residents, and so on. By no means do I suggest that these factors do not matter, only that they are not prerequisite in some places. The more educated migrants from Guizhou take up formal jobs in coastal cities, but few consider living there for long, especially if family situations make it difficult to do so. By contrast, the migrants in the provincial capital city – having had little to no education,

working informal jobs that pay poorly, engaging minimally with people outside their enclave neighborhoods, and taking almost nothing from the state – have no plans to leave city anywhere on the horizon. Considering these cases, the role of the hukou system is less to deflect the cost of public provisions to the countryside – since none exist in the deprived villages in which these migrants originate – than to avoid it altogether.

Chapter 5 picks up this thread with the specific example of low-fee private schools – also commonly known as migrant schools – the abundant supply of which has allowed many children to migrate to the provincial capital with their parents, making Guiyang one of the most receptive cities for families. A close examination of these schools reveals both the mechanisms by which community connections are developed and the problems associated with segregation. The education of migrant children is exemplary of the dynamic that the poorest segments of the migrant population are simultaneously the most dependent on the informal schools to stay in the city – for leaving their children in the village is often not an option – and the most hurt by this institutional arrangement whereby access to public education may be forever out of reach because they cannot accrue any of the required documentation. Even as more migrant students are being incorporated in public schools, this group of children remains left behind.

CHAPTER 2

CITIZENSHIP 2020

Chapter Overview

Developing countries are urbanizing with such a rapid pace that providing basic services to all has proven to be an insurmountable challenge. Among them, China stands out with a political system that can exercise certain exclusionary policies that are unlikely to be implemented as effectively elsewhere. Some of these succeeded in making rural migrants second-class with minimal popular resistance. For years, the fact that migrants had no right to city resources was a generally accepted structural feature, since they were not official registrants there. Yet as more rural people began seeking a better and more permanent life in cities, the old justification for denying them equal access to resources based on their temporary residency began to lose its strength. Over the past decade, there has been much talk by policymakers about eliminating some of the discriminatory policies deemed to cause harm to the "harmonious society" that the central leadership has sought to build – culminating in the New Urbanization Plan of 2014. As part of this new plan for sustainable urbanization, the Chinese state has redoubled its commitment to integrating rural migrants as urban citizens and made significant headways in pro-migrant social policies, such as the expansion of access to public education and social security. Many smaller cities lifted hukou restrictions completely in accordance with central directives, while others received developmental assistance to further the goal of achieving a more spatially balanced urbanization.

Some scholars interpret this new development (and the series of reforms that have led up to it) as a complete turn of the central government's stance from neglecting urbanization to embracing it, from controlling migration to serving migrants (Davies and Ramia, 2018; Chen et al., 2019; Chen and Gao, 2011; Zhou, 2018). This is a relatively optimistic view, and there is truth in it. Others, however, point out the lack of substantial reforms in the largest cities where migrants are disproportionately concentrated and criticize the proposal to divert people to less populated places as insensitive to individual mobility decisions (Wang et al., 2015; Chen and Fan, 2016). Building on this latter line of critiques, this chapter puts forth the argument that recent policy efforts reflect the logic of authoritarian governance and development planning adapted to, and accommodating, the maturing market economy and are thus more of a continuation of the familiar exclusionary practices than a radical departure. The construct of urban citizenship is becoming more localized, depoliticized, and "meritocratized" under the current wave of reforms which, progressive though they appear, have equipped local governments with new tools to exclude certain groups. Even though people are now entirely free to move, the disenfranchisement of the most disadvantaged migrants remains and is frequently used to rationalize displacement or other drastic measures to reduce migration pressure (Henderson, 2010). Although the aim is to raise the level of de-facto urbanization (i.e. percentage of people entitled to the full range of urban services), decentralized governance and the large spatial disparities in resource distribution mean that what citizenship entails varies widely from place to place. Since cities with lower levels of development struggle with service provisions,

driving low-skilled, low-income workers there – even if successful, which is questionable – may not constitute a transformative improvement in equity.

The chapter provides the necessary background for situating the subsequent empirical chapters via a snapshot of China urbanization trajectory and current status. It opens with a discussion on urbanization in developing countries and identifies some of the common structural factors. These are as crucial as contextually distinct experiences for understanding the hybrid nature of China's urbanization process. I then review the status of knowledge on internal migration and urban citizenship in China to analyze the implications of the latest urbanization policies that aim to formally incorporate 100 million more rural migrants by 2020.

The Trouble with "Third World" Urbanization

John Friedmann (2006) argued that "China's urbanization, although entwined with globalization processes, is to be understood chiefly as an endogenous process leading to a specifically Chinese form of modernity" (p. 440). A good place to start then, before delving into the peculiarities of the Chinese case, is identifying some of these global or globalizing processes that have shaped "Third World" [4] urbanization. Indeed, urbanization in late-developing countries has perplexed and intrigued academics and policymakers – from the inadequacies of conventional theoretical frameworks to the repeated failures of developmental efforts. The proliferation of shantytowns and informal economic activities, the persistent segregation among pockets of concentrated

[4] "Third World" is used as a shorthand here. It is a now defunct term with no real suitable substitute referring to the collective experiences of countries that developed relatively late and departed from the modernization thesis characterizing the Anglo-American stages of development.

wealth and poverty, the continuous inflow of people in large numbers despite the miserable conditions and/or government sanctions, and the inadequacy of planning systems to address urban population explosion are unfamiliar to the earlier Northern experience. Moreover, scholars have identified the phenomenon of over-urbanization and urban primacy/oligarchy – a situation in which large segments of people earning a marginal living are disproportionately concentrated in one or a few large cities, while other regions are severely lagging and suffering from population loss – as unique to the Third World (Kasarda and Crenshaw, 1991; Henderson, 2002). For many years, the culprit was believed to be rural-urban migration and the improper management of it with a speed and scale that exceed the progress of industrial development.

It is important to remember at the outset that urbanization is as much about the growing quantity of people as it is about the changing quality of life. Mabogunje (1970) defined it concisely as – at the societal level – "a basic transformation of the nodal structure of a society in which people move from generally smaller, mainly agricultural communities to larger, mainly non-agricultural communities" and – at the individual level – "a permanent transformation of skills, attitudes, motivations, and behavioral patterns such that a migrant is enabled to break completely with his rural background and become entirely committed to urban existence" (p. 2). Urban scholars such as Wirth (1938) and Simmel (1903) saw the post-industrial city life as fundamentally different from traditional life. Lefebvre (1966) predicted an urban transformation with totality, finality, and irreversibility.

Cities in developing countries may have grown more rapidly than their Northern counterparts, but (or rather because of it) the "transformation" has been more reserved

than predicted: spaces and settlements remained suspended in the middle of the urban-rural spectrum; migrants filed into unproductive employment in the city; many new urbanites lacked full citizenship rights; traditional values and kinship ties endured. Cities are constantly growing and changing, but these patterns remain remarkably consistent across many different contexts. Yet even though rural migrants are treated as lesser citizens (Abbas, 2016), the lack of incorporation and other hardships seem to have much effect in deterring new entries. People flock to the city "to take advantage of capitalist produced possibilities no matter whether capital accumulation is going on or not, and often in the face of economic conditions that are just as, if not more appalling than, those left behind" (Harvey, 1996). With the ever-growing and gradually maturing migration networks and infrastructures, cities attract more people as they expand, while service and infrastructure provision struggle to keep up, leaving large segments of urban dwellers in a kind of unincorporated limbo.

This dynamic can be traced to certain preconditions and drivers common to developing countries. Historical-structuralists brought to light the exploitative macro-environment within which urbanization in peripheral countries evolved. Locked into a pattern of unequal exchange in the process of global capitalist accumulation, peripheral countries were kept in a state of underdevelopment by an alliance of their own bourgeoisie with the capitalists. Extracting profits required that labor costs be kept at the minimum. The need to subsidize the formal sector resulted in the development of the informal or survival economy, in which workers are responsible for their own reproduction and treated as mostly expendable (Portes, 1978). Rural surplus labor is funneled into the under-employed and unregulated job ranks with wages barely above

subsistence, and yet people are drawn to the promise of opportunities despite the low chance of its realization. The pessimism about rural-urban migration reached the peak with Todaro's prediction of a continuous influx-unemployment downward spiral accompanying any form of urban investment in generating employment opportunities which then lead to excessive migration – "a symptom of and a factor contributing to Third World underdevelopment" (Todaro, 1980: p. 363). The informal economy not only sustains migrants by substituting for formal employment and state social protection, but it is deeply integrated with the formal sector such that it has become a structural feature of peripheral accumulation (Castells and Portes, 1989; Roberts, 2014). Diffusion of economic benefits to lagging regions, according to Berry (1973), is stymied in developing countries due to the large urban-rural gap and an economic structure that is resistant to decentralization, as "each increment of the urban economy draws in more migrants, to maintain wages at the subsistence minimums" (p. 99). Other explanations for urban over-concentration in developing countries include high natural population increase and authoritarian or centralized governance regimes (Berry, 1973; Shandra et al., 2003; Lottum and Marks, 2012).

While cities are important sites of agglomeration, over-urbanization – with its attendant consequences of poverty, unemployment, overload on public resources, and environmental issues – is widely perceived to be a sign of crisis. Rapid influx of migrants into large cities is alarming for the state for several reasons. First, it frustrates attempts at comprehensive planning, which has a much longer time frame than the pace of demographic changes. Second, congestion and crowding are some of the most noticeable changes that happen with population increase. The encroachment on existing

urban space increases the intensity and frequency of conflicts with local residents. Moreover, cities in the global south are generally ill-equipped to handle the added strain on the upkeep of urban infrastructure and service delivery, because not only are resources scarce, urban planning systems in (especially post-colonial) countries follow outdated Western models and are maladapted to deal with the massive in-migration (Watson, 2009). Despite planners' best efforts, cities seem to grow haphazardly. Attempts at imposing order have resulted in more fragmented spaces and segregated neighborhoods, pushing the urban poor into self-built housing with uncertain tenure status in under-serviced neighborhoods (Alsayyad and Roy, 2006). Rising inequality is a source of constant threat to social stability and political legitimacy of the governing regime. In short, there is every political incentive to limit rural-urban migration despite its proven benefits to the economy.

Why Migration Controls Fail

Scaling back urban population growth to match the actual level of development seemed to be the obvious solution to the problem of over-urbanization. Governments all over the developing world have experimented with a number of overt and covert strategies over the years – including direct mobility controls, wage adjustments, rural development projects, industry re(locations), policy (dis)incentives, and infrastructural investments (Lucas, 1997) – in order to redistribute the population and reduce the pressure on key cities. These strategies were, at best, questionable in terms of effectiveness and, at worst, exacerbated urban inequality and left more people without access to formal employment, housing, and basic services. Some failed because they were not seriously

followed through, either due to conflict of interest or the conflicting view of migrants as simultaneously an economic solution and a social problem (Stark, 1980). A 2014 report by International Organization for Migration argues that in the experience of BRICS, the most serious social problems associated with low-income migrants were caused by earlier attempts to restrict migration and that these attempts spilled over to affect not just migrants but other urban poor as well (IOM, 2014).

The various theoretical traditions all seem to suggest that efforts to restrict voluntary economic migration are doomed to failure, and that places that make use of temporary migrant laborers almost always inevitably end up needing to confront the issues of overwhelming numbers and pressures to incorporate migrants in the local citizenry. Classical economic explanations offer the greatest promise that migration can be controlled: Since these emphasize the conditions at two ends of the migration journey and say little if anything about what happens in between or the people involved in the move, they imply that policy adjustment can moderate migration by altering these conditions. However, a closer reading reveals that once patterns have been established, migration does tend to persist and expand under market forces. In Lewis's (1954) dual-sector model for the developing economy, rural-urban migration is a deterministic process that goes hand-in-hand with capitalist expansion. The model does not include a geographical component, but it assumes a trajectory toward full urban absorption in both production and social citizenship as the subsistence sector in both urban and rural areas shrinks. With increasing length of stay in the city, capitalist workers acquire new skills, tastes, and values, and hence organize themselves politically to demand higher wages (p. 150). Capitalist firms compete by offering their workers better renumerations,

benefits, and other monetary assistance (p. 151). National savings gained from capitalist profits then go toward the construction of a system of social insurance and welfare, which replaces personal savings as security for old age and illnesses (p. 157). In Lee's push-pull hypothesis, migration sustains itself through its contribution to greater diversity in the destination area, more pronounced interregional disparity, accumulation of personal or collective experience, and erosion of intervening obstacles – all of which lead to more migration. Todaro's model suggests that while expected urban unemployment is a potential deterrent to migration, migrants increase their chance of landing an urban job by moving to the city to be closer to recruiters. Some are forced by financial constraints to return to the countryside after a period of unsuccessful attempts; others, however, prolong the job search process by finding employment in the informal sector, and many people end up never making the transfer to the formal sector (Fields, 1975). The informal sector, expanding as the formal sector expands, draws more people in and enables their stay.

Structural explanations posit even stronger migration inertia, seeing how it is a feature of the world system, such that as long as the power asymmetry between the core and periphery persists, there is little governments or individuals can do to change it. The incursion of the global capitalist relations into peripheral countries resulted in mass displacement and mobilization of rural population. Sociocultural links were formed in this process of exchange, facilitating the diffusion of modern values and conspicuous spending habits. From a sociological angle on generalized migration, successful migrants may develop attachment to their host societies, but much more important is the development of stable communities among "failed" migrants. Social ties induce

people to take time out of work to spend in one another's company, and less work means longer time to reach their initial earnings target. During this indefinitely prolonged period, migrants are compelled to improve their lives by building new relationships or bringing old ones from the origin and bargaining for more rights or better working conditions (Piore, 1979). With their native-born children rooted in the local way of life, the decision to return home becomes an extremely difficult one (Castles, 2004). Cumulative causation theories similarly emphasize the role of social context to migration propensity, which changes with each act of migration until robust networks and communities are formed and a culture of migration is established. Migration systems theory also emphasizes the role of migration in information feedback to the sources. Stories of successes in a city raises personal aspirations for migration. Against the countercurrents of discrimination and other obstacles in the city, migrants still manage to acquire skills and possibly accumulate earnings, which contribute to stronger determination to stay and possibly improved residential status (Mabogunje, 1970).

In summary, the literature on urbanization and rural-urban migration in developing countries tells us that the substantial number of unincorporated migrants has roots in both structure and agency. City-bound people are not easily deterred by adversities inflicted by the state or the market. On the other hand, some scholars did challenge the permanent migration paradigm by citing the prevalence of temporary and circular migration in some developing countries (Hugo, 1980; Fan, 2008). Migration theories tend to understate the role of the state (Fan, 2008). China is a case in point, where policies made it so that it was better not to commit to permanent residency in cities. Nevertheless, as Nelson (1976) argues in his study on short-term migration in

Africa and Asia, temporary migration is but a transitional stage toward more permanent patterns in the future. As the next section illustrates, China has, after some delays, entered the stage of permanent migration.

Migration Governance in China

China's divergence from established patterns can be attributed to a host of historical and institutional factors, but the most important one is arguably the high levels of state involvement that persisted well into the market era. Writing twenty years ago in reference to the various theoretical models explaining migration, Solinger (1999) commented that "in an analysis of the Chinese floating population, the models themselves do not compete [but] collapse, under the weight of the state – a state much more involved in regulating its populace's mobility than most other states" (p. 153).

In identifying the stages of urbanization, researchers are able to consistently link the prevailing driving forces and outcomes in each stage to specifics in state policy. Details vary, but the 1978 socialist-to-market transition and the 1994 administrative restructuring are unanimously considered major turning points. More recent studies also include the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, which induced massive internal return migration. The consensus in economic analyses of China's urbanization levels is that China was under-urbanized until the early 1990s due to migration restrictions (Au and Henderson, 2006). Chen et al. (2013) called the period from 1979 to 1995 "stable stage of ascension" and the period from 1996 to 2010 "rapid stage of promotion", between which China tipped over from under-urbanization to over-urbanization – an observation the authors attributed to the declining fortitude of migration restrictions. Fluctuations in

the magnitude and distribution of rural-urban migration are strongly associated with (if not caused by) major changes in developmental ideologies and priorities regarding cities. For example, there was a notable shift in policy stance – after the political crisis of 1989 had subsided – from favoring small cities and towns to encouraging larger urban agglomerations, and another in the late 2000s from framing urbanization as a problematic by-product of industrial growth to seeing it as a driver of sustainable growth. These pro-urban shifts are accompanied by increased intensity of rural-urban migration as well as proliferation and expansion of urban administrative units. A more recent example is population-capping measures to limit metropolitan growth. These measures signaled the return of the fear for "big city ills" which had been tempered briefly during the earlier years of rush-to-urbanize. This has led to declining migrant population in the largest cities and renewed interest in the potential of small towns.

These fluctuations in urbanization patterns are not merely temporal changes at a single administrative scale as in the case of a monolithic state. They are also caused by fragmentations within the state as well as the increasingly complex relations in the state-market-society nexus. Rural-urban migration in China took off largely as a result of state facilitation but later on became increasingly susceptible to market forces. In the early years of market reform, massive institutional and administrative changes were made to accommodate the transition. The establishment of special economic zones, formation of township and village enterprises, and de-collectivization of agricultural land opened the release valve on the reservoir of rural surplus labor, even though the volume and direction of population flow were moderated by the central government. The eastern region attracted the most migrants due to the preferential policies to which

it was subjected for jumpstarting growth with the help of foreign investment. In the first decade of economic reform, spontaneous economic migration (as opposed to official work transfer or university admittance) was largely limited to nearby towns, where the local governments happily sold hukou for extra revenue and, for security concerns, particularly welcomed long-term settlement by families (Woon, 1999). Fragmentation was beginning to occur: In the absence of official approval from Beijing, local cadres in rural areas arranged for out-migration for the benefit of the village (Mobrand, 2008).

By the early 1990s, foreign direct investment in export sectors has embroiled China deeply within global capitalist production. As the private sector expanded, logics of the market – profitability and efficiency – also began seeping into the public sector. This was matched by a notable shift in political ideology to the credit of national leader Deng Xiaoping who prioritized practical results over dogmas and tolerated the price of uneven development. The eastern region experienced disproportionate growth at the expense of other regions in the country (Fan, 1997). Furthermore, the administrative reform in 1994 greatly increased both the fiscal pressure and fiscal autonomy of local governments. Since then, urbanization began taking on a global-local or "glocal" character. Over the next decade, migration became increasingly long-ranged and polarized between east – the destination – and west – the source (Liu et al., 2014; Cao et al., 2018). The growing multitude of actors involved in the facilitation of migration gradually eroded what few barriers there remained.

The progress of marketization was relentless such that compromise needed to be made on the part of the central government to relinquish control on migration and give localities more autonomy. The state must yield to pro-urban developmental pressure in

order to maintain uninterrupted economic growth and, by extension, its political legitimacy. Yet for such a massive authoritarian regime, any form of mass migration is potentially destabilizing, but extreme social inequality in highly concentrated urban areas is particularly dangerous. In order to keep over-concentration in check and minimize the accumulation of urban grievances, the Chinese government preserved the hukou system – a socialist planning instrument, thereby continuing to uphold the privileged status of urban residents while rendering migrants temporary and undemanding. Wallace (2014) called the hukou system "China's loophole to the Faustian bargain of urban bias", because it is able to subvert political crises commonly associated with urban congestion. Even as population movement gradually and inevitably slipped out of control, the hukou system acts to this day as a barrier to settlement and integration. There is much written on the origin and evolution of the hukou system, which I will not rehash here. Suffice to say that it is comparable to an internal passport that fixes state-sponsored entitlements in place, ascribing migrants – especially those from rural areas – an "outsider" status. In its decentralized form, the hukou system does not prevent free movement so much as it does institute a divisive citizenship and arm local governments with an arsenal of tools to exclude migrants from public resources while exploiting their labor (Zhang and Wang, 2010). Today, rural-urban migration accounts for more than half of the increase in total urban population (Chen and Song, 2014), but much of it does not involve hukou conversion. The discrepancy between urban hukou population (citizens) and urban de-facto population (residents) is frequently invoked as a stylized statistic by urbanists to demonstrate the "mirage" that is China's apparent high urbanization rate.

The political imperative of maintaining stability clashes with the economic need for labor mobility. This conflict has resulted in the many peculiar top-down social policies and governance institutions that led to distinct patterns of internal migration in China (Wang and Liu, 2018). At the local level, conflicts arise from the need for migrant labor in the cities and inability or unwillingness to pay for the cost of its maintenance and reproduction. Exclusionary practices and the dearth of housing and services compel migrants to seek alternative, self-help arrangements in the form of enclaves. These are typically located out of the way in engulfed villages or unplanned spaces. In the beginning, these self-initiated solutions to housing and service problems were probably tolerated tacitly despite their questionable legality (for it is unlikely that local officials did not notice advertisements plastered all over walls and telephone poles). Over time, some of the neighborhoods – particularly the ones formed around kinship and employment networks – grew spatially expansive and socially cohesive. According to Zhang's (2001) account of the famous Zhejiangcun – so called because it mostly consisted of migrants from Zhejiang – in Beijing, the lack of integration of migrants into the urban control system "created opportunities for migrants to develop their own social and economic niches in the cities" and for migrant leaders to gain "local control through patronage and clientelist networks within these newly emerged migrant enclaves" (p. 89). Similarly, according to Solinger (1999): "Left abandoned to scramble on their own, quite sizable concentrations of outsiders pooled their resources and carved out a means of subsistence over time. Thus, a great paradox characterized floaters living in such collectivities. The state's registration system constrained them, excluded them from its privileges, and neglected them in its service network. And yet at the same time

they were freed, if to a limited but growing extent, by their abandonment outside the pale of the state's organizations of administration and surveillance; they were also increasingly empowered by their own numbers" (p. 251).

With the accumulation of collective migration experiences through chain migration of families and kin, the dominant "mode" of migration to cities has also changed since its onset – from the sole (mostly male) workers migrating temporarily with no intention of staying to couple and family migrants living in the cities for longer duration with open-ended plans (Fan, 2011; Fan et al., 2011; Fang and Shi, 2018; Chan and O'Brien, 2018). The presence of children in the city and their acculturation to city life can completely change the equation, even if their educational circumstances in the city are not ideal. Settlement took roots despite the myriad obstacles, as theories suggest it would. Even though many migrants to this day still rely on rural support systems for unemployment, sickness, education, and retirement, permanent stay in the city is becoming a viable option for an increasing number of people. The gap in preferences between rural migrants and urban residents is also narrowing with each successive generation. For example, Zhao et al. (2018) profiled the new-generation (post-1980s-born) migrants as more educated, more inclined to urban life, and more likely to "migrate to urban areas with their spouses [and] consume more in urban areas and send less money back home" (p. 18).

The tendency toward settlement despite barriers posed by the hukou system can be observed in the shift in academic research from focusing on the factors leading to permanent migration via hukou conversion to looking instead at the determinants of settlement intention without hukou change. This shift is a response to the observation

that migrants now have more choices over their destinies. Settlement intention is, of course, an experimental outcome that is amorphous and prone to change (after all, who can know the future?), but it is useful for assessing the subjective expectations, aspirations, and goals – perhaps even more so than any actual future trajectories. The mass of publications on settlement intention starting in the late 2000s did not agree on the extent of it among the general migrant population – not least due to the fuzzy and inconsistent definitions of the outcome variable – but unanimously showed that deeper integration in city life contributes to stronger inclination to stay, whether it is better or more secure housing (Xie and Chen, 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Zhou, 2018), better or more secure employment (Zhu and Chen, 2010; Tan et al., 2017), higher stakes of personal investment such as entrepreneurship or self-employment (Cao et al., 2015; Chen and Liu, 2016), or more sociocultural and emotional ties (Chen and Liu, 2016; Du and Li, 2012; Huang et al., 2018). The causality appears to be two-way: People who intend to stay seek out better living conditions, demand a higher quality of life, and object to discriminatory treatment.

Time for a Change

As the inclination for urban life among migrants grew, the notion of citizenship also came to be an increasingly relevant a topic of conversation in research and policy. It is also a difficult one since the availability of low-cost labor formally subsidized by the countryside is a major reason for China's phenomenal economic growth (Vendryes, 2011). Dualistic urban/rural governance has resulted in a number of seemingly promising urbanization outcomes that set China apart – including relatively subdued

slum proliferation, low levels of urban unemployment, higher rate of incorporation in formal production, and more balanced city size distribution – and make it seem as if China has managed to avoid many of the pitfalls that have beset other late-developing countries. The fact that rural areas have for so long acted as a reserve and offered resources for migrants to fall back on, in some ways, lessened the urgency of the problem of service provisions in the city. What would changing this dualistic system mean? Who should be made responsible for the increase in public expenditure?

The humanitarian perspective received a boost from an economic imperative, when the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 sounded the wake-up call that China needed to be weaned from export-oriented growth (Guo and N'Diaye, 2009). Policymakers began calling for strengthening the domestic consumer base by transforming rural migrants into urban citizens. In 2013-2014, the State Council launched the NUP as well as suggestions on reforming the hukou system. The NUP outlined a "people-centered" approach to urbanization that focuses on getting more people to settle down in cities and gain access to urban services (Guan et al., 2018). This approach, presumably, is a more substantial mode of urbanization – one that can harness the growth potential of agglomerations – than either wasteful sprawling of sparsely-populated, seldom-used new construction or desperate crowding of transient, frugal, and untaxed people in the metropolis.

However, the NUP also stipulates that, since many mega-cities on the eastern coast are nearing their carrying capacity, migrants should be directed toward smaller cities and secondary towns in the interior. This counter-stream movement is to be incentivized through tightening hukou restrictions in large cities, loosening hukou

restrictions in small cities, and speeding up industrial development and urban-rural integration in satellite towns. By the time of writing, almost all provinces have eliminated the agricultural vs. non-agricultural distinction in hukou status within prefectures or other scales. Although this reform is a largely formal change that needs to be substantiated by other policies, it could well reduce the cost of short-distance and local migration and make it a more attractive option. Meanwhile, the institutional barriers surrounding large cities and along the provincial borders remain mostly unchanged. In this manner, urbanization is to be simultaneously sped up and dispersed – its overall level raised without drastically increasing urban concentration in any one particular area. After all, if people moved to many regular cities instead of just a few large cities, there would be less burden added to the shoulders of any single receiving locality. This strategy is also in perfect synchronicity with the goal of reducing regional inequality.

The NUP was immediately met with skepticism. The general critique among academics is that it is simultaneously too ambitious – as the financing mechanisms for the increased cost of such dispersed urbanization remain unclear – and too conservative to have any major effect on the majority of underprivileged migrants in large cities (Chan, 2014; Chen et al., 2018). Some argued that the strategy might not significantly alter migration patterns (Wang et al., 2015), as studies have shown that migrants prefer living in large cities for the opportunities they offer to the next generation. Hu and Chen (2015) argued that as great as integrated urban-rural development and city clusters sound, they can contribute to widening gap between different regions and drive more poor people into expensive cities.

New Regimes of Mobility: From Restriction to Displacement

Recent widespread decentralization in China and beyond has granted city governments more authority in handling migrants. In many large cities, not only is the inclusion of migrants not prioritized, migrants are frequently blamed for crowding the city. Since the "global urban turn" (change in stance from "cities are too large" to "cities are not large enough"), the anxiety about rampant city growth has faded somewhat from policy rhetoric, but control over migrant population at the local level now wears the disguise of city-making and urban (re)development. These projects are often speculative and have the power to displace large swaths of informal settlements, pushing migrants outward toward the suburbs and pricing them out of prime urban space. The promise of securing basic goods and services for the urban poor through trickle-down benefits is rarely delivered. Exclusion continues, justified on the basis of notions of place-bound citizenship that has been pointed out by scholars as unsuitable for a mobile world, with roots in higher-level migration controls from the past. Even more concerning is the use of exclusionary practices as a way to discourage migration.

In the beginning of 2010s, Beijing and Shanghai governments announced their plans to control population by eliminating low-end industries and the people working in them. These "non-essential personnel" mostly take the form of low-skilled rural migrants. Other mega-cities without such a transparent agenda have also pursued formalization, redevelopment, and new construction projects to the detriment of migrant settlements. While the role of the hukou system in direct migration control has largely disintegrated by now, its role as an instrument of division and exclusion remains

relevant in rationalizing state-driven displacement and indirectly restricting mobility. Although informal settlements shoulder much of the load in housing and service provision, they eventually get in the way or become so prominent that the outgrowths of their activities start encroaching on "territories" of the local residents.

The destruction of Beijing's Zhejiangcun in 1995 was one of the earliest, most well-documented and politicized cases, involving the eviction of over 40,000 migrants and demolition of their homes (Zhang, 2001). The tension in the nation's capital was not abated for long, as migrants soon returned inconspicuously, which was met with acquiescence from local officials, and migrant population continued rising. Then, a little over a year ago, another similar incident happened in Daxing district of Beijing – a fire broke out in a building inhabited by migrants that led to a spectacular display of force by the government that caused waves of destruction to rain down on migrant neighborhoods in the vicinity. Local officials acted quickly for fear of being held responsible for inaction. Many residents and occupants were served an eviction notice on the basis that their buildings did not meet safety standards. They were then given days or even hours to clear out before their belongings were tossed into the street and the buildings were razed to the ground. The sensation was palpable. Foreign media was flooded with reports and pictures of neighborhoods in shambles and decries for injustice. According to a New York Times article, "local officials have tolerated, inspected, and taxed these buildings for years until the current crackdown, when they suddenly declared them illegal for being fire hazards, or for lacking permits". Such declarations, followed by the forceful termination of water and electricity, was the customary practice in numerous other less dramatic occurrences of displacement. The

closure of wholesale markets and low-fee private schools that cater to migrants had similar effects of disrupting livelihoods. In Beijing, these actions have caused the migrant population to dwindle since 2014. The number of migrant schools dropped from over 300 in 2006 to 112 in 2016. Chan and Ren (2018) found a large segment of migrant children "missing" from the city.

What appears to be more benevolent than these expulsions – but could be in fact just as disconcerting – is the institution of a point-based residency system that grants a subset of entitlements to migrants meeting the specified qualifications. This reform opened up a legal avenue for migrants to gain citizenship by their own merits such that those barred from accessing city benefits are "rightfully" handled because they are undeserving (Zhang and Wang, 2010). Zhang (2018) interpreted this as a transition toward neoliberal-authoritarian rationality of citizenship governance and a shift from the "dualistic urban-rural segregation to a multiplication of legal statuses, boundaries, and hierarchies of citizenship" (p. 857). Blanket discrimination against migrants has been replaced by subtler, more segmented forms of discrimination (Lu and Wang, 2013). It is likely a response to the changes brought about by marketization and privatization, which led to greater differentiation within the migrant population as well as more intense contestation with urban residents (Zhang, 2002). Migrants who possess the appropriate skills and resources to fulfill a need in the labor market are selectively incorporated (Friedman, 2017). Woodman (2016) argued that "locating citizens and governing them through municipal regulatory regimes [with] divergent social provisions among localities" have made the distinction between insider and outsider (rather than urban and rural) the organizing logic of citizenship (p. 343).

The devolution of migration governance – from central control over population movement to local control over the resources available for "outsiders" who are otherwise free to enter or leave as they wish – has reshaped the mobility regime. For instance, by refusing to "warehouse" or maintain certain kind of labor and only incorporating them on an "as-needed basis", local governments can undermine long-term settlement (Friedman, 2017). Withholding the right to affordable housing pushes migrants into urban villages and, in so doing, physically and conceptually "lumps" them with rural, feudal things that have no place in the modern city (Siu, 2007). Redevelopment projects may benefit local homeowners but rarely address the loss suffered by migrant renters – a phenomenon that Tomba (2017) termed "gentrifying urbanization". The practice of "deflection" – to ensure that legal entitlements never make it out of the bureaucratic labyrinth to reach their recipients – often has the effect of driving migrants out of the city (Chan and O'Brien, 2018).

When one considers the fact that these measures are common in large cities with a global agenda and that resource distribution across different localities is highly uneven, the strategy of dispersing urbanization carries broader implications for mobility and inequality. Critics of NUP were quick to remark that small cities with few fiscal resources are neither attractive to migrants nor capable of absorbing them. Woodman (2017) argued that "vast differences among localities in the provision of public services and benefits are justified through a ranking of places on a spectrum from 'backward' to 'advanced'", with the latter reserved for people of the "advanced" status as determined by human and cultural capital. She pointed out that such a regulatory framework does

not wholly restrict migration but rather shape it in accordance to public perception of where people supposedly belong.

Concluding Remarks

Urbanization in the Global South is often accompanied by a rise in number and scale of informal settlements which exist to serve those who are excluded from public provisions and in turn draw in more newcomers from the countryside. In China, this process occurred in a more controlled and less dramatic fashion because of the hukou system – a policy tool based on sedentary welfare allocation and, as such, discriminates against outsiders and discourages permanent settlement. It used to alleviate some of the immediate pressures for cities, but its restrictions also spurred the growth of self-reliant communities such as the famous Zhejiangcun in Beijing.

In addition, some migrants are able to successfully take advantage of the opportunities presented by market transition and accumulate enough wealth to live in cities. Commodification of the housing market broadened the options to live in rental housing instead of factory dormitories and opened up the possibilities of urban homeownership. Entrepreneurial spaces mushroomed in major urban centers as the local demand for migrant-supplied goods and services soared. The opportunity to engage in flexible employment enabled migrants to bring their families and settle down over longer time horizons. The downscaling of migration governance freed up inter-jurisdictional movement: After all, cities can formulate their own hukou policies, but they could hardly interfere with migrants before they arrive or barricade their own borders.

At the same time that new opportunities are emerging, state retreat from public provisions has widened the inequality within the migrant population on the basis of an individual's ability to gain access to privatized resources. Furthermore, recent pro-migrant reforms tend to reward those who have greater ability to do so at the expense of the less fortunate. Although there are nowadays more formal and informal pathways toward urban citizenship, the question of "who gets what" has also become more intricate: Migrants who have next to nothing are not being helped by the current system, if it has not made things worse. The previously rigid top-down state control has been supplanted by a softer and more arbitrary form at the local level characterized by selective disenfranchisement and slum clearance. Central policies that promote social justice and welfare for migrant workers suffer from implementation blocks at the local level due to inadequate funding. As a result, local governments resort to "flexible interpretation" of these policies to maintain the status quo (Davies and Ramia, 2008).

Decentralized hukou administration strengthened the authority of some local governments to make the variations among localities salient. As some mega-cities like Beijing are becoming increasingly hostile toward and unaffordable for the have-nots, the less elite cities seem to present opportunities for more equitable and inclusive growth. The NUP suggests something akin to a compromise, which is to improve regional inequality and entice migrants to spread out to places where they can be formally incorporated – killing two birds with one stone. The chapters that follow continue to explore the regional angle to China's urbanization story and, more specifically, its association with household-level characteristics of migrants.

CHAPTER 3

HOUSING AND WELFARE

Chapter overview

The previous chapter discussed the evolving role of the hukou system in shaping urban citizenship and ended on the note that the restrictions associated with hukou status have nowadays become, for some people, less of an impediment to achieving urban livelihoods. The years leading up to NUP saw a turn in China's urbanization policy toward expanding welfare and affordable housing for rural migrants so as to encourage them to put down roots in the city. These new developments are the result of the progress in market transition and urban assimilation of rural migrants. In this context, homeownership in the city is a significant and relevant outcome for migrant households because it can be a foothold leading to access to basic services, permanence and stability, rise in social status, intergenerational wealth transfer and accumulation, and leverage to demand compensation from urban redevelopment. To be sure, a few cities have restrictions for non-hukou-holders to purchase homes. In most other cases, however, homeownership is a means to overcome hukou limitations and achieve a city's "membership" through market channels.

Although China has an exceedingly high homeownership rate among city locals, rural migrants are predominantly renters. The limited financial resources of migrant households and skyrocketing housing prices in many cities make homeownership impossible. Another reason, as suggested by evidence from numerous studies on settlement intention, is that migrants are not committed to buying a home if their

livelihoods are precarious or if their ties to the city are weak. One major cause of this insecurity and uncertainty is the lack of access to social security and other safeguards. In light of the heavy emphasis on expanding social security and welfare for migrants in national policies, I ask whether efforts in this area could spur more migrants to invest in urban housing or, at the household level, whether entitlement to social insurance in a city is a determinant for homeownership in the same city. The international scholarship disagrees on the relationship between homeownership and welfare – whether the former is a substitute for or a consequence of the latter. Immigration studies support the second possibility. As the hukou system makes China's internal migrants akin to foreigners in the country, I hypothesize that access to welfare is associated with higher likelihoods of homeownership, because it indicates socioeconomic and institutional integration with the city and hence the intention to stay.

This chapter tests this hypothesis against the alternative that migrants purchase housing independently of their welfare status in the city or as compensation for not enrolling in social security – using the 2015 CHFS survey which contains information on household assets. The findings support the settlement/integration story, after controlling for other employment factors, which turn out to have no significant effects. While these regression results do not say anything about causality, the positive association suggests at least the possibility that incorporation in the urban social security system contributes to the intent and ability to purchase housing. And if so, policy efforts in expanding welfare coverage for rural migrants will have implications for urban settlement and consumption. In other words, if the goal is to encourage more migrants to settle down in cities as it should be, more insurance and welfare schemes should be

made available to them, especially ones that do not require employer sponsorship as rural migrants are more likely to be found with informal occupations.

How Important is Hukou, Still?

The hukou system may have persisted for four decades now since the beginning of marketization, but reforms to the housing and welfare system since the late 1990s have opened up more avenues for long-term migration. Previously under the planned socialist economy, urban experiences were dominated by the "iron rice bowl" model of secure employment and housing, sponsored by the state through work units and reserved exclusively for urban hukou holders. Rural migrants were barred from urban housing and had little incentive to migrate permanently. The model has now been replaced by privatized housing and a social security system more befitting the market economy – one that is based on a combination of individual payment, employer contribution, and state provision (Huang, 2017).

Partially de-linked from hukou and residency status, urban social insurance has become more accessible to rural migrants. Eligibility for employment-based insurance depends more on the specifications in the working contract than hukou status (Cheng, 2014). While separate residency-based schemes exist for urban versus rural hukou-holders (with large disparity in benefits and payouts), progress is underway to combine them into one. The recent elimination of agricultural/non-agricultural distinction in the hukou status in most provinces also created new access to urban social insurance for local migrants. In general, however, rural migrants are still disadvantaged due to their

low status in the labor market and the decentralized or localized administration of social welfare.

Similarly, the commodification of housing has rendered hukou status less critical to acquiring urban housing. Most cities do not have restrictions against non-hukou-holders in purchasing commercial housing listed at market prices. The few that impose restrictions do so to specify certain conditions such as payment into social security or length of residence so as to discourage speculative housing purchase. Various sources, including the survey used here, showed that nowadays among rural migrants, about one in five lives in owned housing – certain a substantial improvement since beginning of the century. However, the hukou system's legacy contribution to inequality and continued hukou-based discrimination in access to subsidized housing are major factors behind the large gap in homeownership rates between urban locals and rural migrants. It was mostly the privileged residents that emerged as winners from the housing reforms (Logan et al., 2010). The development of the private housing sector in effect replaced some of the institutional restrictions with price restrictions.

Housing and Welfare in International Contexts

Two bodies of international scholarship are relevant for the empirical question at hand. One is the research on homeownership and asset-based welfare. The other is classical assimilation and locational attainment theory from immigration studies. Due to different conceptualizations of housing and welfare citizenship, they hypothesize opposite relationships between homeownership and welfare participation.

The asset-based approach to welfare provision is a governance model based on the theoretical underpinning that housing is "a complex welfare good that supplements and mediates the flow of other welfare goods and services at the household level" (Doling and Ronald, 2010: p. 166) and what Torgersen (1988) termed "wobbly pillar under the welfare state". It is typically characterized by implementation of pro-homeownership policies, deregulation of financial markets, and reduction in public spending. The ideology had originated in the UK, gained popularity within and beyond, and led to a proliferation of market-oriented housing policies in a number of countries. This was joined by widespread neoliberal restructuring of welfare systems (Rolnik, 2013; Belfrage, 2008). Individualization of risks through asset-based welfare is particularly relevant for post-socialist transitional countries, many of which saw high homeownership rates following privatization and commodification of public housing and dramatic reduction in public welfare budgets (Mandic, 2010). A parallel discussion on asset-building in developing countries treats housing as a pivotal household resource that can compensate for low levels of welfare. The normative implications of asset-based welfare are controversial, with some arguing for its ability to address serious deficits in welfare provision and others raising doubts about its sustainability and equitability (Izuhara, 2016; Walks, 2016).

The empirical hypothesis, assuming an asset-based welfare system, is that at the household level, homeownership and participation in social security – especially pensions – tend to be inversely related via a substitution or trade-off effect. Housing is a critical component of welfare strategies for homeowners (Soaita et al., 2017; Toussaint and Elsinga, 2009). The state's retreat from redistributive welfare in the context of

austerity makes housing acquisition even more imperative (Ronald and Kadi, 2017). For aging societies, it is believed that housing wealth can be tapped to compensate for declining revenue following the retirement of baby boomers (De Decker and Dewilde, 2010; Malpass, 2007).

The actual findings are mixed and context-dependent, varying according to demographics, characteristics of the housing stock, financing mechanisms, and so on (Doling and Ronald, 2010). For example, Engelhardt (2008) found the increase in homeownership among the elderly in the US almost entirely attributable to rise in social security benefits. By contrast, Torricelli et al. (2016) found that for Italy, homeownership is negatively associated with participation in pension schemes in spite of new incentives to participate and fluctuations in the housing market. Dewilde and Raeymaeckers (2008) found evidence of both the trade-off effect and double disadvantage experienced by people without owned housing or pensions.

The literature on immigrant homeownership offers a contrasting perspective. Focusing on indicators of assimilation, this group of studies typically attributes variations in homeownership rates across and within immigrant groups to the degree of socioeconomic and institutional integration (Alba and Logan, 1992). Empirically, citizenship status has been consistently shown to be a significant predictor for homeownership (e.g. Vono-de-Vilhena, 2012). In the US context, a person's legal status also matters for homeownership, as it affects access to educational opportunities, financial resources, and welfare benefits (McConnell, 2015). Furthermore, longer duration of stay in host countries has also been found to be associated with higher degree of assimilation and therefore higher likelihood of homeownership (Mundra and Oyelere,

2017). All three factors – citizenship, legal status, and duration of stay – indicates the permanence of settlement and security of livelihoods. Because having access to social welfare enhances security and encourages assimilation, the empirical hypothesis is that it should be associated to higher likelihood of homeownership – especially for people with foreign origins.

Housing and Welfare in China

In China, as elsewhere, there are large between-group differences in homeownership rates. One of the most significant differences is that between urban local residents and rural migrants. The latter group tends to be poorer and less familiar with city life, so the process of assimilation is more difficult. Rural migrants are frequently compared to international immigrants with a semi-legal status: They are permitted to be in the cities but not guaranteed all basic rights and services (Roberts, 1997). Most directly relevant to questions of housing ownership are two factors. The lack of local hukou almost always prevents migrants from accessing many affordable housing policies. Second, non-locals are much less likely to benefit from inter-generational transfer of housing ownership than are locals (Cui et al., 2016).

The debate on migrant homeownership largely revolves around the impact of institutional factors relative to socioeconomic factors. Some researchers argued that as market transition theory predicts, individual life-cycle factors such as age, education attainment, and wealth are becoming more important. This is especially true in smaller cities where hukou status does not make as much of a difference (Huang et al., 2014). In these locales with fewer institutional hurdles, migrants have adapted and found other

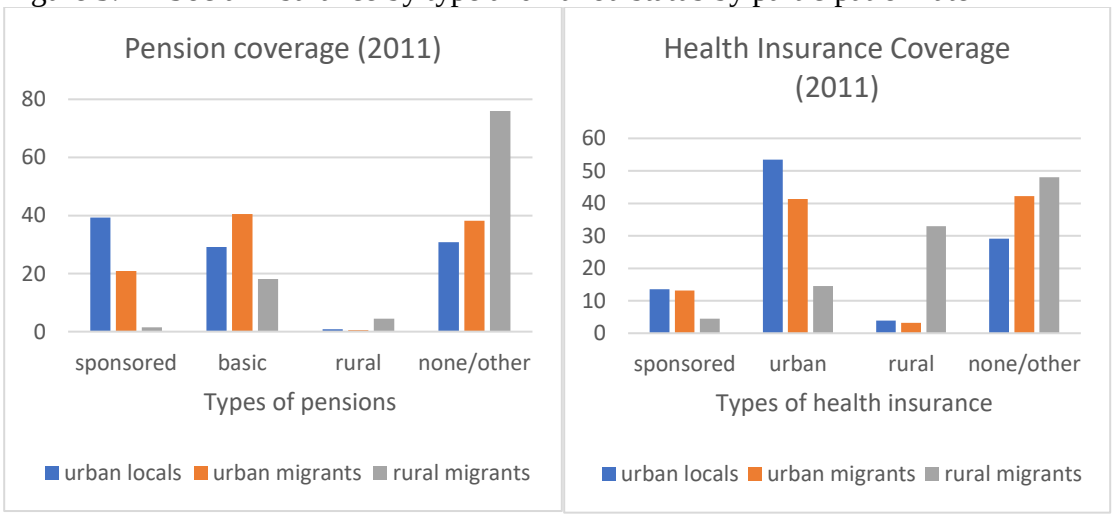
ways to settle down (Yang and Guo, 2018; Tao et al., 2015). Others maintain that institutional barriers are the main reason for low homeownership rate. Sampling migrants from six large Chinese cities, Fang and Zhang (2016) demonstrated that not only does hukou status still have a decisively limiting effect on homeownership, but access to urban health insurance is also significant. Using an earlier iteration of the CHFS survey, Wu and Zhang (2018) evaluated a number of other institutions, such as urban social insurance access and rural land rights. They argue that because a person's hukou status is tied up with these institutions, it is still indirectly responsible for making it difficult for migrants to purchase homes in the city.

Researchers have begun to isolate social security as an independent predictor of homeownership because urban social insurance has become accessible to wider segments of the rural migrant population (Huang et al., 2017). Figure 3.1 shows this trend between 2011 and 2015 according to the CHFS survey. To clarify, there are still separate schemes for urban and rural residents, employees and non-employees, public sector and private sector employees—the former of each pair of population groups privileged over the latter in benefit levels[5]. However, rural migrant workers may be entitled to urban, employment-based social security such as basic pensions and medical insurance for employees, unemployment insurance, work injury compensation, maternity insurance, housing provident fund, and other forms of welfare, depending on the specific arrangements with their employers. Any shortfalls on the employer's side

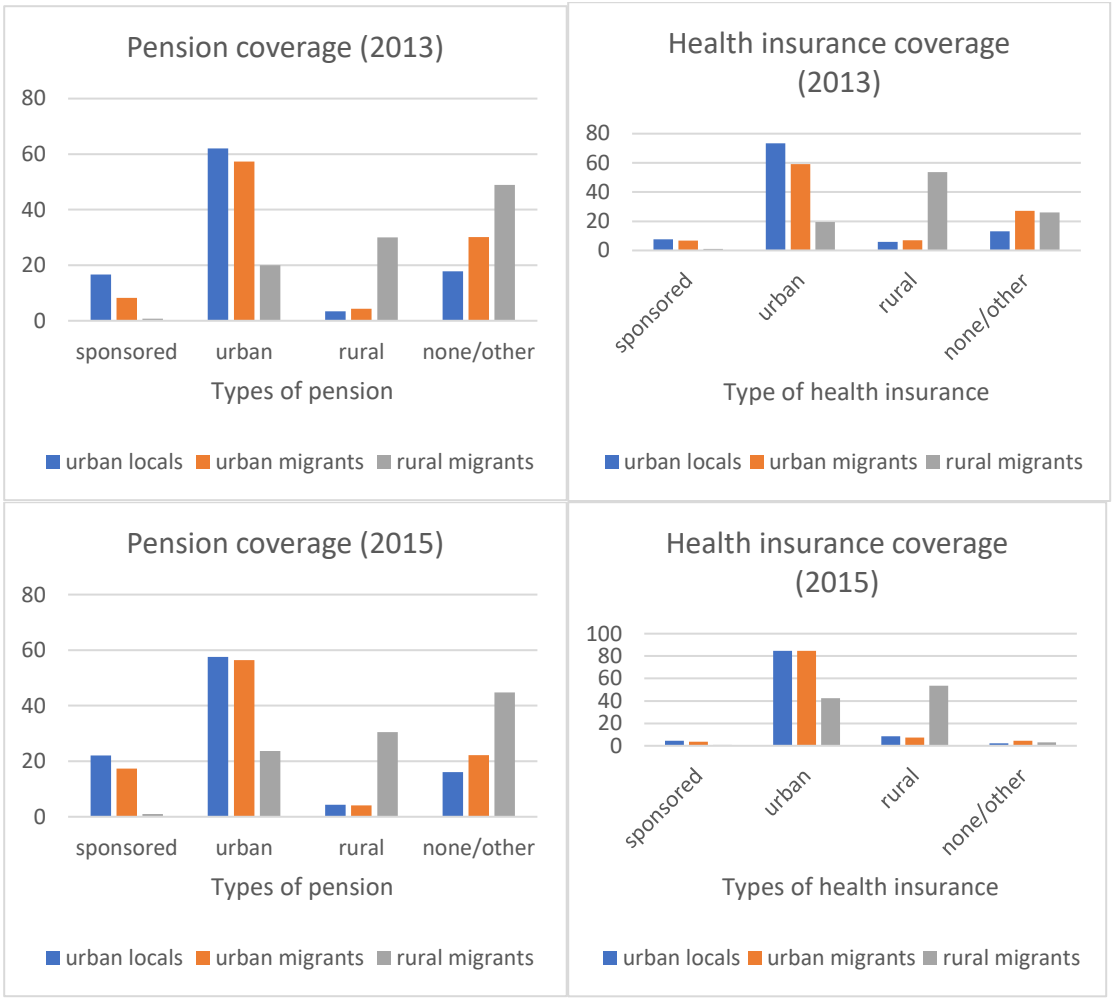
[5] Take pensions as an example: The disparity in income replacement rate is largest between urban civil servants and rural residents on basic pensions for peasants. The latter is so low (30%–40% at best) that young people do not feel incentivized to participate, according to the IZA conference paper "Incentive problems in China's New Rural Pension program" (2011) by Lei, X., Zhang, C., and Zhao Y. Accessed from: http://conference.iza.org/conference_files/CIER2011/ lei_x6071.pdf.

are supposedly covered by the state. To address the problems of employer non-compliance with social insurance law that legally entitles workers and the low coverage of the irregularly-employed, the government has created residency-based schemes that depend primarily on individual contributions and state subsidies, which have been credited for a dramatic increase in medical insurance coverage[6]. Enrolling in these, however, requires local hukou registration. Overall, the urban/rural divide in pensions and health insurance can be expected to decline with the eventual unification of urban and rural schemes. The state is also moving toward making public sector employees contribute more rather than rely entirely on government subsidies[7]. Geographical restrictions, on the other hand, remain in effect by means of the hukou system, at least at the time of survey: Migrants often encounter difficulties accessing and transferring benefits across localities (Gao et al., 2012).

Figure 3.1 – Social insurance by type and hukou status by participation rate



[6] China Labor Bulletin. Accessed from: https://clb.org.hk/content/china%E2%80%99s-social-security-system, on 6/1/2019.
[7] State Council Decision on Reforming Pension System for Public Sector Employees (2015). Accessed from: http://www.mohrss.gov.cn/SYrlzyhshbzb/dongtaixinwen/shizhengyaowen/201501/t20150114_148951.htm on 6/19/2019.



These reforms have weakened or altered the link between the hukou system and social security. While some studies (e.g., Wu and Wang, 2014) found having a rural hukou status negatively affects participation in pensions, health insurance, and unemployment insurance, others found that the presence/absence of a labor contract outweighs hukou status in social insurance participation (Cheng et al., 2014; Gao et al., 2012). On the other hand, hukou status does affect other employment outcomes, such as educational disparity, labor market segmentation, and workplace discrimination (Demurger et al., 2009; Song, 2014). These outcomes do affect access to welfare. Wang

(2011) argued that most migrants find employment in private firms, which are more likely than state-owned firms to evade compliance of social insurance mandates by informalizing employment. Migrants also tend to be less knowledgeable about welfare programs or less willing to participate in them (Xu et al., 2011). The findings from research on the settlement intention of rural migrants suggest an answer as to the relationship between homeownership and access to welfare. Even though settlement intention is not exactly the same as homeownership, it is a precursor and a response: Migrants make house-buying decisions based on whether they intend to stay (Wu, 2004). Research on migrants in mega-cities such as Beijing showed that settlement intention is not as high as expected (Fan, 2011; Fan et al., 2011). Being excluded socially, spatially, and institutionally compels migrants to purchase homes anywhere but in the destination cities, even if they do not plan on moving into them soon (Zhan, 2015). Studies cited in the previous chapter have consistently shown that stronger integration in a host society contributes to a stronger inclination to stay (e.g. Zhu and Chen, 2010; Tan et al., 2017; Cao et al., 2015). The causality appears to be two-way: People who intend to stay seek out better housing conditions (Xie and Chen, 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Zhou, 2018). These findings suggest that assimilation outcomes may be more important than welfare-substitution effects for China's rural migrants, who are somewhat uniquely situated due to the hukou system.

Hypothesis

I expect that homeownership would not reflect a substitution effect for welfare because rural migrants suffer from double disadvantage in both. They do not benefit from most

urban-based pro-homeownership measures. Their generally poor financial situation – another consequence of China's long-standing institutional exclusion – means that much of the commercial housing market is over-budget, and that they have no access to credits and loans. On the other hand, having social insurance in the city can mitigate the risks of migration and urban living. Otherwise, loss of job or home, major injuries and illnesses, and old age are just some of the things that could send migrants packing. Migrants are likely less willing or able to invest in housing when they are concerned about losing their urban livelihoods or having to save up money for contingencies. For these reasons, I hypothesize a positive relationship between access to urban social insurance and homeownership.

It is important to stress that this test does not convey information about causality. Wu and Xiao (2018) suggested that settlement intention does not always result in higher likelihood of social insurance participation. This may or may not extend to homeownership which, like welfare citizenship, is an indicator of socioeconomic integration. Time-series data are needed to confirm causality – to show, for example, whether housing purchase follows social insurance registration or it is the other way around. Nevertheless, knowing the association is also useful, because for migrants, the ability to purchase a home in the city may not be at all related to their employment or welfare status within that city: the wealth may have been accumulated elsewhere, or it may be preferable to maintain their access to rural benefits for the sake of left-behind family members or future retirement. A positive association, on the other hand, would at least open up the possibility that there exists a causal relationship as well.

Data and Model Specification

The 2015 CHFS is one of the most informative datasets currently in existence. It uses three-stage random probability proportional to size sampling for counties (districts, county-level cities), residential communities, and households. 29 provinces are represented. It consists of three separate datasets: the first contains household-level information on assets and wealth; the second contains individual-level demographic information including social insurance participation – for all individuals nested in the households; the third contains geographical information on the interview site at the household level, including the province, region, and urban/rural designation.

The sub-sample used in this analysis includes households surveyed in urban areas based on the information on urban/rural designation provided in the third dataset. Using information about hukou status in the second dataset, the "rural migrant" is identified as a person whose hukou status is classified as rural or agricultural and registered in a location (county or district) that is different from the one in which he or she regularly resides. To reflect the connectedness of decision-making by household members and the trans-locational nature of many migrant families, all households with at least one rural migrant are included, except for households in which none of the rural migrants reside in the survey city. The survey respondent by design is a long-term resident of at least six months. The final sample for the model has 1,736 households with 6,244 individuals.

The analysis uses multilevel binary logistic regression with robust errors on the dependent variable "homeownership". This dependent variable is coded 1 if the household owns a home in the survey city and 0 otherwise. In the vast majority of the

cases, this property is also the household's primary residence. This measure for homeownership is chosen because it can be linked, location-wise, to the independent variables via the survey city. Individual social insurance participation is aggregated at the household level to match homeownership. Where location is important, I include only the household members residing with the survey respondent in the aggregate measure, since household members living elsewhere do not contribute to the household's institutional integration in the survey city.

The main set of explanatory variables is participation in social insurance, measured as the number of household members enrolled in pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance, work injury compensation, maternity insurance, and housing provident fund – coded 1 or 0 for each household member and summed at the household level. At the individual level, "pensions" is coded 1 for a household member residing in the survey city if he or she is enrolled in any of the government's sponsored urban schemes. These can include (translated literally from Chinese) retirement pay for employees in government agencies and public institutions, basic pensions for urban employees, basic pensions for urban residents, basic pensions for rural residents, or merged basic pensions for urban and rural residents. The last one was uncommon at the time of the survey as it was an experiment in reducing urban-rural disparity.

The binary variable for health insurance is coded 1 (at the individual level) if enrollment or registration in the primary type of health insurance (in the event that a person is enrolled in multiple schemes) is processed in the survey city and 0 otherwise, for all schemes and for all household members, regardless of residential location. Like pensions, health insurance schemes include public (state) healthcare, basic health

insurance for urban employees, basic health insurance for urban residents, and so on. The most common scheme for rural migrants is called “new cooperative health insurance for villages”. The number of people enrolled in other health insurance schemes, including commercial health insurance, is negligibly small to zero in the sub-sample.

Enrollment in residence-based health insurance typically requires local hukou registration. Rural migrants without access to basic health insurance for urban employees still need to rely on the inferior rural insurance. While getting reimbursement is possible for receiving care in a different city, there are many limitations (at the time of the survey). Reimbursement can only be processed in certain designated hospitals, and the amount of reimbursement is based on policies in the place where one is registered rather than the place where one receives care. This is the reason that only the location of registration for health insurance is considered.

Other insurance schemes such as unemployment, compensation for work injuries, maternity, and housing are relatively minor compared to pensions and health insurance. For these variables, only household members living in the survey city are included in the aggregate household-level measure. At the individual level, enrollment in each scheme is coded 1.

The controlled factors also include a set of variables to account for connections to localities. Engaging in agricultural production and enrollment in health insurance elsewhere indicate ties to rural origins. Because permanent or long-term migrants tend to migrate within the provincial borders, the proportion of intraprovincial migrants in a household can be important. Households that are split in separate locations are less

likely to commit to settling down, so a binary variable is used to indicate split households. Some previous studies include "living with spouse" and "living with school-age children" but the results are inconclusive. Fang and Zhang (2016) found that these are positively and significantly related to homeownership, while Wu and Zhang (2018) found the opposite for children in megacities and no significance in the full model. One reason for this discrepancy, besides different model specification and sample selection, is that situations involving children in reality are extremely complicated because of China's education system and the hukou. Children at different ages may be more or less likely to reside with migrant parents, and it is unclear how that affects housing tenure. While parents may not purchase a house in the city if their children cannot join them, this does not imply that childless adults (also coded 0 for "living with school-age children") are less likely to purchase a house. Parents may also purchase a house in anticipation of transferring children to city schools in the future. Housing tenure decision by couples living together in the city also involves many different considerations at different points in the life course. For these reasons, a single binary variable denoting split households is used here to capture both "living with spouse" and "living with children", with 1 indicating that one or more household members does not reside with the survey respondent.

Additionally, the model controls for demographics, household income, and employment. Demographic variables include the age and sex of the household head, as well as average education attainment for all adults in the household. Employment variables include the number of household members employed in the public sector, having a work contract, working a temporary or informal job, working as farmers, and

self-employed. While employment status is related to social insurance participation, this does not preclude the distinct possibility of self-employed or informally employed individuals purchasing their own social (not commercial) insurance without the aid of an employer. The number of employees or "breadwinners" in the household is controlled for.

Finally, the 'region' variable refers to the eastern, central, and western regions of China, designated 1 (baseline), 2, and 3, respectively. Various sources may group the northeastern provinces differently. According to the data usage manual of this particular survey, the eastern region includes Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, and Hainan; the central region includes Shanxi, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan; the western region includes Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia. This grouping is consistent with the generalization that eastern provinces are the most developed, followed by central provinces, followed by western provinces. Since it is not critical to the study to know which cities or provinces exhibit higher to lower homeownership rates, city-level and provincial-level variations as random effects, with the exception of city median housing price, which is calculated from the full sample.

Empirical Results

Table 3.1 shows descriptive information for the key variables. A comparison is made between mixed-status households and households consisting solely of rural migrants. It is clear that the latter are more advantaged across the board – housing ownership,

education, income, secure employment, and social insurance participation. 22.6% of rural migrant households own housing in the survey city, compared to 52.5% for mixed-status households. Mixed-status households have much higher income – approximately 120,000 RMB yuan compared to only 77,000 RMB yuan for rural migrant households. These advantages reflect the contribution by local residents and urban migrants in the household.

Table 3.1 Descriptive information for key variables

Key Variables	***Rural migrant***	***Mixed-status***
Owns a home in city of residence (% of households)	22.6	52.5
Urban Social Insurance (% of households)		
At least one household member has…		
… urban pensions	31.5	64.5
… local health insurance	33.1	60.3
… unemployment insurance	23.6	38.6
… work injury compensation	26.6	40.3
… maternity insurance	19.5	35.1
… housing provident fund	15.1	33.9
Household Characteristics/Demographics		
Age of household head	37.4	40.0
Household head is female (%)	31.9	38.1
Household size	2.76	3.86
Education among adults (3=junior high school; 4=senior high school)	3.5	3.9
Mean household income	77,156	120,080
Employment (% of households)		
At least one household member is…		
… employed in the public sectors	11.7	24.6
… employed with a formal contract	34.7	51.6
… working a temporary job	22.7	17.5
… employed as a farmer	0.7	0.4
… self-employed	22.0	20.6
Urban/rural ties, settlement (% of households)		
At least one intra-provincial migrant	50.2	43.1
Split household	8.5	29.7
Household engaged in agricultural production last year	8.8	8.8
At least one household member has health insurance elsewhere	62.8	64.1
N	1046	690

Data Source: 2015 China Household Finance Survey.

For employment and social insurance participation, table 1 presents a modified measure that shows the proportion of households with at least one person working in the public sector, working informally, having health insurance, and so on. Subtracting from 1 produces the proportion of households without, for instance, any social insurance. Rural migrant households are more disadvantaged in terms of pensions, health insurance, and housing fund than unemployment insurance, work injury compensation, and maternity insurance, in comparison with mixed-status household. 68% of rural migrant households are without pensions, and nearly that many have no health insurance for any household member – compared to less than 40% for mixed-status households.

51.6% of mixed-status households have at least one person working under a formal contract, compared to 34.7% for rural migrant households. Rural migrants are slightly more likely to be self-employed or work as farmers. Mixed-status households are less likely to reside together and engage more interprovincial migration, probably due to a combination of in-migrating and outgoing household members.

Breaking down the data geographically shows that housing ownership is higher in central and western regions, which is expected as these are generally migrant-sourcing regions with less expensive real estate. 20%, 38%, and 23% of the households without any urbanites own a home in eastern, central, and western region, respectively. These regions also, unsurprisingly, show higher prevalence of intra-provincial migration. The more developed eastern region exhibits the highest level of social insurance participation, with the exception of medical insurance, which is the highest for rural migrant households in the central region. Even though rural migrant households

are disadvantaged compared to mixed-status households, the regional disparities in terms of employment, social insurance participation, and homeownership are much more severe for mixed-status households than for rural migrant households, suggesting that having an urban hukou in the eastern region carries more weight than in the interior regions.

Table 2 shows the coefficients and odds ratios from regression analysis. The sustained importance of hukou is evident in the results for percentage of local residents in the household and percentage of rural migrants in the household, which are, respectively, positively and negatively related to housing ownership. The positive and significant associations between age, education, household size, household income and housing ownership are in agreement with established findings. These associations reflect the importance of life cycle and assimilation factors for housing ownership and have been universally demonstrated across many different contexts.

For social insurance participation, having urban pension and health insurance in the survey city contribute to housing ownership. One additional household member with pensions and health insurance is associated with a 37% and 17.3% likelihood increase for housing ownership, respectively. These associations are significant even after controlling for hukou status. On the other hand, no significant associations are found for unemployment insurance, work injury compensation, maternity insurance, and housing fund, although the positive directions (or signs) are as hypothesized. The results for social security confirm the findings from earlier studies by Fang and Zhang (2016), Wu and Zhang (2018), and Huang et al. (2014).

Table 3.2 Regression results for homeownership

Dependent variable: own a house in the survey (residence) city	*Coefficient/Odds ratio (p-value)*
Access to social insurance in the city of residence	
Number of household members enrolled in …	
… urban pension	+ 0.370/1.447 (0.011) **
… local health insurance	+ 0.173/1.188 (0.000) ***
… unemployment insurance	+ 0.187/1.206 (0.307)
… work injury compensation	+ 0.089/1.093 (0.735)
… maternity insurance	+ 0.015/1.015 (0.906)
… housing provident fund	+ 0.060/1.062 (0.641)
Household characteristics/Demographics	
Percentage of household members with this city's urban hukou	+ 2.507/12.273 (0.000) ***
Percentage of rural migrants in the household	- 0.798/0.450 (0.049) **
Age of household head	+ 0.027/1.028 (0.000) ***
Household head is female: 1=yes; 0=no	- 0.047/0.954 (0.668)
Household size	+ 0.313/1.368 (0.000) ***
Education attainment among adults	+ 0.126/1.134 (0.006) ***
Household income (10,000 yuan)	+ 0.008/1.008 (0.053) *
Employment	
Number of employees in the household	- 0.277/0.758 (0.426)
Number of household members working in public sectors	+ 0.025/1.025 (0.864)
Number of household members employed by contract	- 0.357/0.700 (0.330)
Number of household members working temporary jobs	- 0.283/0.754 (0.483)
Number of household members working as farmers	+ 0.983/2.673 (0.292)
Number of self-employed household members	+ 0.236/1.266 (0.484)
Urban/rural ties (settlement)	
Percentage of intra-provincial migrants in the household	+ 0.665/1.924 (0.001) ***
Split household: 1=yes; 0=no	- 0.675/0.509 (0.000) ***
Engaged in agricultural production last year: 1=yes; 0=no	- 0.344/0.709 (0.159)
Number of household members with nonlocal health insurance	- 0.140/0.870 (0.003) ***
Region (eastern = baseline)	
2 = central	+ 0.626/1.704 (0.030) **
3 = western	+ 0.198/1.125 (0.691)
Median housing price (10,000 yuan)	- 0.002/0.997 (0.413)
Province random effect	1.70e-31 (S.E. 2.98e-30)
City random effect	0.529 (S.E. 0.197)
N	1,736

*** p<0.01, ** 0.01<= p<0.05, * 0.05<=p<0.1
Data source: 2015 China Household Survey

It is somewhat surprising that employment factors do not appear important. This agrees with a previous finding (Chen and Liu, 2016) that labor market status is not related to settlement intentions. However, estimating a partial model consisting only of employment variables changes the picture (table omitted due to space limit and available upon request). In the partial model, one more household member working in the public sector makes the household 50% more likely to own housing. Self-employment raises the likelihood of homeownership by 65%. This agrees with the existing literature arguing that entrepreneurship and self-employment contribute to stronger settlement intention by increasing contact with locals and foster a sense of belonging and commitment. Having a signed work contract raises the likelihood of homeownership, while working at a temporary job lowers it. The significance of these associations disappears with the addition of hukou, demographic, socioeconomic, and social insurance variables. Fang and Zhang (2016), by contrast, found a significant and positive relationship between job with contract and housing ownership, but none for age and education of the household head.

For the last group of variables, intra-provincial migration is associated with higher probability of housing ownership, as does co-habitancy of household members in the same city. Migrating within the provincial borders typically crosses lower economic and cultural barriers (Wang and Fan, 2012) and shorter distance from home, which makes permanent settlement easier. Household members living together in the city increases the level of social and emotional attachment to that city. Conversely, having one's primary health insurance elsewhere decreases the likelihood of housing ownership in the survey city. Engaging in agricultural production is negatively

associated with housing ownership in the city, but the effect is not significant. Geographically, housing ownership is 87% more likely for migrants living in the central region. In a single-level logistic regression without city and provincial random effects, both central and western regions are significantly associated with higher housing ownership, as expected for places with cheaper real estate.

Concluding Remarks

Both housing ownership and social insurance coverage for China's rural migrants have risen over the years and are increasingly disconnected with hukou status. Previous studies are inconclusive about which factors affect decisions about settlement and housing, and to what extent (Liu et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2017). One reason for the disagreement is that they draw from different, localized samples. The present study takes advantage of a nationally representative survey conducted recently during a time marked by large strides forward in the area of social security. The regression analysis shows that social insurance participation is associated with higher likelihood of homeownership for rural migrant households after controlling for other contributing factors.

This result suggests that the locational attainment model as it is used in immigration studies is a viable framework for analyzing homeownership for China's internal migrants. The framework assumes the existence of persistent structural barriers between the migrant population and the host society as well as the importance of intra-group differences in personal resources—such as wealth and human capital—in determining housing outcomes. It hypothesizes that economic, social, and institutional

integration of migrants positively influences their upward residential mobility. In this study, citizenship status, welfare access, and assimilation factors (i.e., socioeconomic and life-cycle characteristics of individuals and households) were found to be significant predictors for migrant homeownership. Since migrants still face limitations in receiving subsidized healthcare in their destination city, it makes sense that the locational restriction on accessing medical insurance benefits matters and shows up in the regression as a significant institutional barrier.

Based on these findings, I argue that rural migrants are often not committed to settling down in destination cities because their non-local and non-urban hukou status circumscribes their rights as welfare citizens and introduces a major source of precarity. In order to encourage homeownership and asset-building, policies should aim to expand social security for migrant workers and their families. For proof of causality, however, time-series analysis is needed. The cross-sectional analysis only shows that families with urban hukou holders were advantaged in both housing and social security. Another limitation is that there is incomplete information in the dataset about where migrants come from. It is likely that migrants moving from rural areas in the eastern region to urban areas in the western region would exhibit different patterns than those moving in the other direction. Finally, because this survey is conducted by residential grid sampling, rural migrants as a group may be under-sampled since they tend to be more concentrated in enclave neighborhoods, where cheap rentals and informal jobs are common. This means that the number captured here is an estimate for the upper limit, and that the actual levels of housing ownership and social insurance participation among migrants are even lower.

Some regional implications can be drawn from the regression results. First, intraprovincial migration is positively associated with homeownership. For rural migrants originated in interior regions, the cities in their province are usually more affordable. Social security benefits are also easier to transfer within a province than across different provinces. Cultural and cost barriers to migration are also subject to the same provincial border effects. An unexpected finding is that employment-related factors do not matter in the presence of other more impactful variables. From the descriptive analysis, it appears that the eastern region which receives migrants has the highest social insurance participation but lowest housing ownership. This suggests that housing prices are prohibitively high and/or settlement intention is low. This disconnect between secure employment and homeownership may well be specific to the migrant population, though this requires further investigation: Liu and Xu (2017), for example, found that temporary migration is eastward where employment opportunities are, while permanent migration tends to be concentrated in the interior.

Overall, the homeownership rate for migrants is still quite low, and social insurance coverage also has much room for improvement. Rural migrant families are completely situated outside of state protection. The many progressive legislations on the social security front are counteracted by the informalization of labor. Moreover, although migrants are legally entitled to access urban social insurance, they are prevented by other practical constraints, such as the precarious nature of employment, inability to afford the cost, or lack of knowledge about their rights and options. Zhang et al. (2019) demonstrated that public expenditure on social security for people with relatively low human capital generates high benefits for sustained economic growth. To

achieve socially and economically sustainable urbanization, in the coming years, this disadvantaged group needs to be the target for continued social security and affordable housing reforms.

In the years after the survey was conducted, there have been moves by the government to accelerate the merging of urban and rural residence-based social insurance and implementation of a single social security card that can be used anywhere in the country. Such improvement in flexibility can potentially broaden migration and settlement options for migrants. Regression results here show that family separation is not conducive to settlement and housing ownership. Since children's eligibility to enroll in health insurance typically depends on the enrollment status of their parents, expanding social insurance coverage not only helps the working adults but also supports other family members. Considering that employment outcomes (besides wage) are insignificant and that many rural migrants work informally, more options for pensions and health insurance should be made accessible without the need for employer contribution. Finally, interior cities are more promising places to concentrate efforts on expanding welfare because they are less costly and easier to navigate for intraprovincial migrants. The next chapter continues the analysis on these as sites of urbanization.

CHAPTER 4

MIGRATION CHRONICLES IN EMERGING CITIES

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines migration dynamics in Guizhou province by triangulating statistics, documents, and narratives. The province is one of the least developed and urbanized in China but has been growing in leaps and bounds in recent years due to investment from the central government. Indeed, if there was an award for "most improved" region in China, Guizhou would arguably be a deserving recipient. Though still developmentally behind most other places in the country, its rate of growth in GDP, population, and urban construction over the past decade often topped the national charts. For example, Guizhou has maintained a double-digit growth in GDP in the past decade as the national growth stagnated. In 2017, it ranked highest in the country. Long-time local residents unanimously reported palpable improvements in urban amenities, transportation infrastructure, and standards of living. The establishment of a national-level new development area in 2013 in the rural interstice of two prefectures led to remarkable transformations in the province's peripheral regions.

In contrast to the previous chapter, this one focuses on urban settlement at the micro level in a single region. It offers glimpses of the dynamics of incoming and local migration and varying experiences in different cities from the perspectives of migrants themselves. Here, I continue to build on the previously-discussed literature on settlement intention and destination choice of China's migrants but with a focus on

emerging cities, and engage with the international literature on the impact of peripheral development on migration. The disagreement about how policy changes affect individual migration decisions is in some ways rooted in the irreducibility of structure and agency. Guizhou is a valuable case study for contributing to this conversation due to the strong relevance of rural development and intraprovincial migration, which tends to be more permanent and more demonstrative of the connections between origin and destination. It also serves to advance the discussion on China's ordinary inland cities; to date, knowledge production on these places is very much lacking.

The main question investigated in this chapter is how development policies – including the ones that resulted in its underdevelopment – affect individual migration experiences and outcomes. The next section reviews the literature. The third section provides an overview of macro level migration statistics to show the rising importance of inland destination and justify my choice of case study. The fourth section profiles Guizhou in terms of policies, places, and people and offers a multi-faceted analysis of the urbanization dynamics. To accomplish the research objectives in this chapter and the next, I conducted 74 interviews through a combination of snowballing and convenience sampling, including 23 migrant households in urban districts, counties, towns, townships, and villages within the large provincial capital of Guiyang, the small prefectural city of Anshun, and the urban-rural interface in Guian (an amalgamation of the two city names) New Area which contains parts of both cities. Histories of economic development in the chosen sites are obtained from official plans and a series of domestic research publications called "skin books" produced by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The chapter concludes with a broader discussion on the implications of

interior cities for equitable growth and prefaces the next chapter that specifically addresses the issue of educational equity.

Emerging Cities Literature

What little literature there is on China's emerging cities suggests that these cities have potential for not only absorbing migrants but also doing it in a less myopic way than their more established counterparts (Mackenzie, 2002; Yang and Gallagher, 2017). There are two separate issues at hand that are important for policy: whether investing in smaller cities can divert migration, and whether they can be made more inclusive. The previous chapters touched on some scholars' skepticism about the central government's effort to lure people away from mega-cities. Critics mainly focused their objection on the limited scope of hukou reforms, which they argued is not enough to affect migrants' preference for large cities (Zhang, 2011; Chen and Fan, 2016). Other studies, however, showed that the answer is more complex as a multitude of factors enters into migration decisions (He et al., 2017).

As for equity implications, emerging cities in the interior are growing in a time marked by greater awareness for sustainability, upscaling of governance, and emphasis on balanced development (Li et al., 2014; Wu, 2017; Yi and Wu, 2018). Inland mega-cities Chengdu and Chongqing blazed the trail for others by implementing a more coordinated development model that prioritizes migrant rights, urban-rural integration, endogenous growth, and quality of life (Cai et al., 2012; Chen and Gao, 2011; Ye, Qin, and LeGates, 2013; Cui, 2011; Cheng, 2013). A case study on Hefei showed that national policies played a significant role in the impressive growth of this regional

center in the otherwise underdeveloped migrant-sourcing province of Anhui (Zhao and Zou, 2018). Recentralization of governance is also evident in the recent proliferation of large development zones and expansive city-regions (Li, 2015). This form of integrated development is based on a "leave no one behind" principle. Finally, the WDS has resulted in substantial improvements in transportation, energy, and information infrastructure in the interior ((Lai, 2002; Shiu et al., 2016). Accompanying the improvements in infrastructure, there have also been a series of programs to support small towns and villages, which spurred the expansion of rural non-farm sector, in-situ urbanization, and occupational transition. However, studies found new inequalities being produced in this process as government compensation for land appropriation is relatively insignificant compared to the type of employment migrants were previously trained for, meaning that some people lose more than they gain (Song et al., 2018).

The impact of these new developments in China's interior on migration dynamics is not yet well-understood. Focusing on labor policies, Yang and Gallagher (2017) argued that local governments in inland provinces are more inclined to be inclusive because they use local (intraprovincial) labor force, unlike coastal mega-cities that grew by exploiting migrant workers from far away. This implicates entirely different dynamics between the state and workers: "The incentives and expectations of all three actors – firms, workers, and local governments – may be different under conditions of longer time horizons, less mobility, and greater social and cultural integration of migrants and local residents" (p. 161). Compared to interprovincial migrants who go for large cities, a greater proportion of intraprovincial migrants go to small cities. Although employment opportunities tend to be more limited, studies have

shown that migrants' quality of life and satisfaction level are the highest in small – but not too small – cities, because housing and public services are more easily accessible (Chen et al., 2015).

The literature in the international context is also divided on the subject. Early on, scholars have suggested that the only fundamental solution to unconstrained metropolitan growth is through economic development policies that attract workforce to less crowded areas including less developed regions, small cities, secondary towns, and villages (Stark, 1980; Todaro, 1980; Simmons, 1981). However, empirical studies generally do not support the idea that peripheral development can resolve core metropolitan problems. Investment in transportation infrastructure, agricultural modernization, rural-urban integrated management, and education have been found to increase emigration in the long run (Rhoda, 1983; Massey, 1992; Becker et al., 1994; Beauchemin and Schoumaker, 2005; Bakewell, 2008; Das, 2015). In more recent years, studies have found that urbanization in secondary towns can play a bigger role in poverty reduction and inclusive growth for rural migrants than large urban agglomerations (Christiaensen and Todo, 2014; Gibson et al., 2017; Ingelaere et al., 2018). On the other hand, strategies to develop backward areas have also been criticized on the ground of their "sedentary bias" that, by incentivizing people to stay closer to home, disregards mobility as essential to freedom and good life (Bakewell, 2008; Castles, 2009).

To answer the question of whether small cities aid in more balanced growth requires first understanding their dynamics – to which my case study contributes. This chapter assesses policy implementation from the perspective of target groups – i.e. the

extent to which developmental contexts have bearing on migration decisions and experiences. Before I delve into how policies shape people's decisions, I highlight the recent migration patterns suggesting a rise in intraprovincial migration and the importance of interior destinations.

The Rise of Inland Destinations

In 2008, the National Bureau of Statistics established a nationwide monitoring system specifically to keep track of migrant workers who originated from rural areas. Data collection began in the villages with a sampling of households registered in villages with one or more members no longer working on the farm. Every year since then, an annual report was published on migration trends and migrants' living conditions in the city, including employment, housing, education, and social integration. One of the latest trends shown in these reports is that migration distances are shortening. For example, the proportion of local migrants, or people who work off-farm jobs in the same township as their hukou registration, has been increasing in a monotonic fashion since 2010 from 36.7% to 40.0%. Although this is different from migration to cities, it indicates the expansion of rural non-agricultural sectors, also sometimes referred to as in-situ urbanization. Another example is that the proportion of intraprovincial migration has seen consistent rise from 46.7% in 2008 to 55.3% in 2017. The increase is the steepest in interior provinces. The magnitude of increase in percentage points is greatest in the western region, which speaks to the growth of migrant-sourcing provinces. This trend is complemented by counting migrants in the origin and destination. While the number of migrants headed for or staying in the eastern region has more or less plateaued since

the second half of 2000s, the number of migrants in central and western regions has been increasing at, respectively, 2~3% and 4~6% annually during the years of survey. At the same time, the supply of migrant workers by eastern, central, and western regions has increased by 0.3%, 1.8%, and 3.3%, respectively. This means that the interior is seeing both higher labor output and absorption. In fact, migrants from the western region accounted for over half of first-time migrants in 2017 which, combined with the rise of intraprovincial migration, indicates that western provinces are urbanizing particularly fast.

These trends can be attributed to changes in macroeconomy, policy, and demographics. Migrant labor shortage in export manufacturing zones in the eastern region was observed as early as 2004 and puzzled researchers who observed simultaneous existence of rural labor surplus (Knight et al., 2011; Wang, 2014). The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 affected manufacturing and resulted in the unemployment of 23 million migrant workers. Many of these workers went home and did not return even after economic recovery. In the following year, severe labor shortage was reported along the coast (Chan, 2010). In 2009, the number of migrant workers in Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta dropped by 7.8% and 22.5%, respectively. Meanwhile, WDS received a boost from a government stimulus package in 2009 to maintain GDP growth in the Global Recession which created 50 million non-agricultural jobs primarily in infrastructure construction (Chan, 2010; Cai et al., 2010). Many factories in the eastern manufacturing regions around this time relocated inland in search of cheaper land and labor.

The growing importance of interior cities as sites of urbanization can also be inferred from demographic changes in the migrant population. First, new generation migrants (born in 1980 or later) became the majority for the first time in 2017. A number of studies have found that compared to the older generation, younger migrants are not as inclined to resume or take up the farming life. They also tend to be better educated and more concerned with their children's education and well-being such that they prefer keeping them close to leaving them behind. As life in first-tier cities is fraught with difficulties, migrants may look to less expensive or exclusive cities to settle down and purchase housing, as suggested in Chapter 2. Studies found that although net migration is eastward, migrants usually settle down in smaller cities and secondary towns closer to their origins (Yang et al., 2016; Tan and Hao, 2018). Zang et al. (2015) showed that high housing prices in the eastern region discourages migrants from buying a house. Older studies showed that permanent migration involving hukou transfer (Hu et al., 2011) or without hukou transfer (Su et al., 2018) tends to be across short distance and intraprovincial. Liu and Xu (2015) found that temporary migrants are found in coastal areas with better employment opportunities, while permanent migrants are in south-central and south-western areas with low city entry barriers. Third, the workforce is becoming more feminized due to the rapid growth of service industry relatively to manufacturing and construction. At the same time, women are still the primary caretakers of elderly parents and other dependents who, in migrant households, often get left behind (Liu, 2004). Even though women have more opportunities to find jobs off the farm, they may still have to stay relatively close to home in order to continue fulfilling their caregiving duties. Moreover, as Chapter 1 discussed, the dominant mode

of migration is becoming more family-oriented, and migration aspirations are no longer restricted to earnings alone. This implies that the income advantage of traditional destinations is shrinking if interior destinations have other things to offer.

Policies, Places, and People

Historically, Guizhou was part of China's borderlands. Scholars wrote of the region's wild landscapes and exotic cultures. Starting in the Ming dynasty, the government had been moving people there for resettlement and deploying military units for defense. The geographical disadvantages of the region were apparent then: A land punctuated by mountains was not ideal for the development of agriculture or cities, and the gift of frequent precipitation only benefited the very few flat parts. A popular saying thus characterized Guizhou: "never three days without rain; never three miles without hills; never more than three silvers on a person". For a long time, Guizhou was rarely a target for development, and as a corridor, passageway, and (in the Second World War) regional transportation hub that connected surrounding provinces and a destination for the resettlement of educated youths during the Cultural Revolution, its growth was largely driven by exogenous factors by the process of diffusion.

Guizhou's isolation had always been both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, indigenous groups were sheltered from the negative mainstream influences such as opium epidemics and certain regressive customs. The pristine landscape was noticed by travelers as early as the 1930s as valuable for tourism. At the same time, although Guizhou was one of the first places to implement the household responsibility system which decollectivized agriculture, its transition into market economy was stalled by a

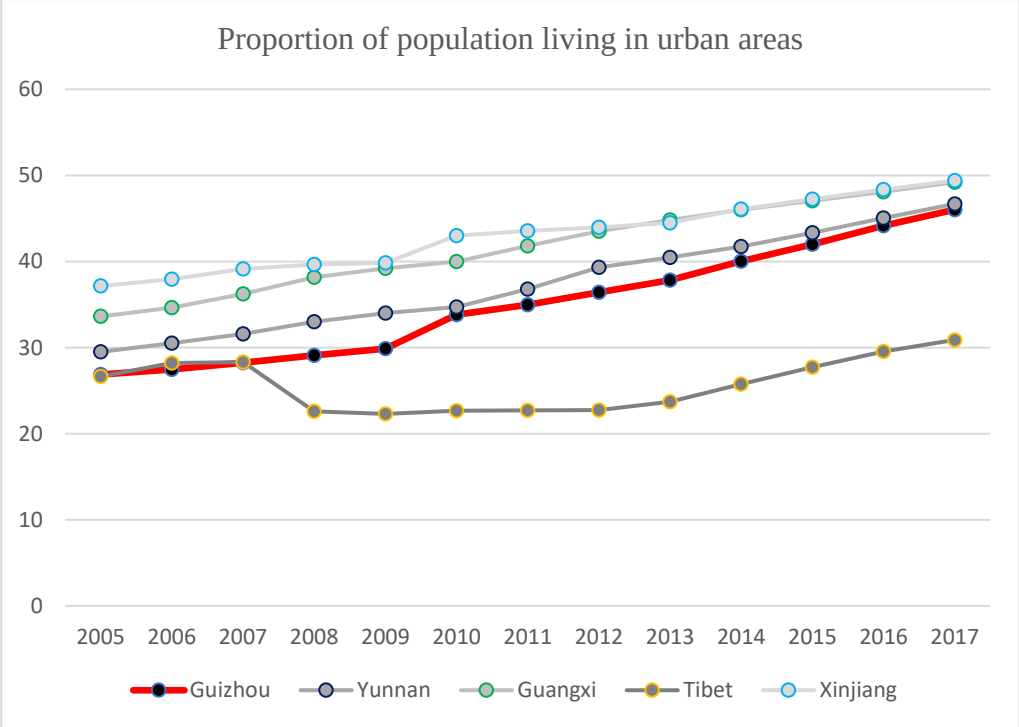
lack of skills and resources. Many remote rural areas were stranded in poverty and untouched by the progress of industrialization. Skilled jobs were taken up by migrants from nearby provinces, leaving the local workers with hardly anything worthwhile to do. Economists in the late 1980s coined the term "Guizhou phenomenon" to summarize the range of observations for the province's severe underdevelopment: large internal disparities in natural resources, rapid population growth vis-à-vis deforestation and deteriorating farmlands, stunted industrialization, low investment, poverty and low savings, and leviathan government institutions.

This dismal situation took sharp a turn in the 21st century, when the central government invested heavily in infrastructure for western China, launched reforestation ecological projects, and cracked down on corruption. With these new developments, discussions about the potential of Guizhou as a land of energy, minerals, tourism, and culture reappeared in policy and public discourses. Attempting to capitalize on Guizhou's comparative advantages in modern industries, planners embraced a kind of leap-frogging strategy that centers around a clean, creative, cognitive-cultural economy (Yu and Gibbs, 2018). The current underdevelopment was re-framed as a blank slate for more comprehensive and integrated development, turning disadvantages into assets.

In recent years, Guizhou has grown rapidly. Construction nearly doubled between 2004 and 2014. The province has been consistently losing people each year, which is unusual even among migrant-sourcing provinces – until 2012. As the rate of natural growth has remained more or less the same throughout, this turning point indicated a major reversal in the net migration trend: Even though as of now it is still in the negative, in-migration is rapidly gaining, having almost doubled since 2010. Out of

the one million incoming migrants in Guizhou now, about 40% live in the provincial capital. There are about six million outgoing migrants (which is less than previous years), 70% of whom went far to Zhejiang and Guangdong. Overall, people in Guizhou are more mobile than a decade ago when 95% of people lived in the same place as their hukou registration. Migrants now make up about 15% of Guizhou's residents, up from 11.9% in the previous year. About four in five originated from within the province.

Figure 4.1 – Guizhou's urbanization rate compared to other laggers



Guizhou is the second least urbanized province after Tibet: As of 2017, the proportion of urban residents is 46%, making it one of the few provinces remaining (Guangxi, Yunnan, Gansu, Tibet, and Xinjiang) with more people in villages than in cities. Although it urbanization level is low, its urbanization rate is the fastest in the

group (Figure 4.1). In 2015, the last year in which information on hukou type was collected, 83.6% of people in Guizhou have agricultural hukou, which means that most people living regularly in urban areas are not officially registered there. All cities other than Guiyang are less than half-urbanized. Guizhou's mountainous terrain limited the *size* of cities and created sub-optimal distribution of city sizes: Between one large city and the abundance of small cities, there is a dearth of medium-sized cities to bridge the two. According to State Council's 2014 definition of city ranks based on the number of residents in urban districts[8], Guizhou only has one large city (the provincial seat Guiyang), one medium-sized city (Zunyi), seven small cities, and four tiny cities. Towns in Guizhou are also typically more rural in character and governance.

The progress in terms of social policies has been slow and steady. Social insurance coverage has been gradually expanding in recent years. In 2016, Guizhou eliminated agricultural/non-agricultural distinction in the hukou system, although the hukou status still includes residential location. It is up to the individual city to determine the extent to which rural residents within its jurisdiction are entitled to urban services. Despite improvements in education, the illiteracy level (and gender inequality) is still comparatively high in Guizhou, as is children dependency ratio – most likely a result of left-behind children. Most of the province's resources are devoted to poverty alleviation, which involves tracking every single household to determine the amount and type of need. Provincial leadership takes this project very seriously and sends people to double-check whether local officials visited all the households assigned to them. One

[8] Mega-cities: > 10 million; extra-large cities: 5-10 million; tier 1 large cities : 3-5 million; tier 2 large cities: 1-3 million; medium cities: 0.5-1 million; small cities: 0.2-0.5 million; tiny cities: < 0.2 million.

interviewed official told me that he got into a great deal of trouble when one villager did not remember his visit when asked by provincial representatives. In the investigations that followed, the local official had to produce documents to prove that he indeed did not skip on this person (Interview #PB-07, July 8th, 2017).

Guiyang

Guiyang is a prefectural-level city with six urban districts and three rural counties. It is the only city in the province with more urban residents than rural residents – 3.59 and 1.21 million in 2017, respectively – and, according to the 2010 census, one of the two cities in which there are more residents than citizens, making it a migrant destination. Only about half of Guiyang's total residents have an urban hukou. The economy relies on tertiary industries; tourism, in particular, is booming. Guiyang has been in the national spotlight in recent years, the reason for which can be traced to a 2012 national policy designating the city to be a regional center, and one of the national centers, for cloud computing and related big data industries. In 2016, Guiyang hosted the inaugural Global Big Data Summit and Expo and the Eco-Civilization Forum Global Annual Conference in quick succession. As of 2015, Guiyang ranks 20th out of all provincial capitals in terms of GDP but 1st in terms of GDP growth, at a stunning 12.5%.

By comparison, Guiyang's advancement in social policy is less than stellar. According to an index developed by the Marco Polo Project to assess the difficulty in obtaining city hukou, Guiyang is actually one of the less accessible interior cities in terms of hukou. Guiyang was well known at the turn of the century as the pilot city for its comprehensive implementation of the nation-wide housing monetarization policy.

The headlong rush into full marketization for the sake of economic development objectives rather than actual housing needs led to soaring prices and severe inequality (Zhu and Lee, 2006). To this day, migrants are completely excluded from welfare housing. Nevertheless, not all policy areas are without progress. According to a 2017 government report, enrollment in urban pensions and unemployment insurance saw a 10% increase from the previous year. Enrollment in urban health insurance increased by about 5%. Almost all rural hukou holders are now covered by rural health insurance. 88,000 people are beneficiaries of minimum social security benefits, although the number of people below the poverty line is unknown. According to the department of education, the percentage of migrant children enrolled in public schools has increased from 50% in 2010 to 68% in 2016.

My interviewees in Guiyang are mostly married and aged between 20 and 40. While each individual and household had unique struggles, there were some common elements to their stories. First, none had intention to leave Guiyang in the near future, least of all return to their rural origins. Going to other cities involved too much uncertainty for children, and life in the village was not financially sustainable. Many lost their land to reforestation projects. They would also not subject any family member to the harsh living conditions back home. Second, education level was low and reflected a clear gender imbalance. Men typically completed five years of schooling (the number of elementary school years at the time of enrollment), and women typically between zero and three. Interviewees cited lack of skills and resources as the main reason for not migrating farther away or out of the province. There were no other large cities in Guizhou to migrate to. Some families were extended ones with adult siblings or elderly

parents living together. They typically relied on each other and close friends rather than the government. Housing contract was common, employment contract less so, and none was covered by urban social security. The jobs they took up in the city included carrying things – usually construction materials but could be anything, cleaning (domestic or public sanitation), operating small businesses, and working for companies in relatively low-skilled occupations. In summary, dire poverty in rural Guizhou drove out entire families; their limited education restricted the possible destinations to Guiyang, which had plenty of low-cost housing and low-skilled jobs; they seemed to be neither helped nor hindered by the state in achieving settlement.

The story of interviewee #GY-19 is illustrative. She worked the night shift as a janitor, so I talked to her during the day in her apartment, which she kept exceptionally clean and tidy, when her daughters came home from school for lunch. It was on the second floor of a shanty building in the dilapidated urban village of Meiyaozhai, which was why I was surprised to find that it had a full bathroom with running water and a kitchen with gas stoves (and that both were spotless).

Now in her 30s, she had come from the rural areas of Anshun to Guiyang over ten years ago. She was married to a "naturalized" Guiyang citizen but later divorced him due to his drinking problems. Their two daughters were both born in Guiyang. Before she could register them as local residents, however, she got into some serious conflicts with her in-laws. Her daughters ended up being registered under Anshun agricultural hukou, the same as her, which prevented them from attending public schools in Guiyang. After the divorce, she tried to petition for changing her daughters' hukou status to that of their birth father but could not produce marriage or divorce certificates

(which was not unusual for migrants). The children's father not only refused to take a paternity test but kept missing court dates. After a long legal battle, she finally tracked him down and got him to sign a birth certificate, which the children did not have before due to the missing marriage certification. While the hukou application was still up in the air at the time of the interview, she at least obtained proof that her children were born in Guiyang.

She said she would do whatever it took to get her daughters educated, so that they would not grow up like her, not knowing even how to write their own names. She had never gone to school. Her parents allowed her two brothers to attend school and kept her and her sister at home due to gender discrimination. Now she took care of their elderly mother after their father passed away. Her older brother was working far away and never bothered to come home, and her younger brother never did much of anything at home. She had wanted to go farther too, but then there would be no one left to care for their mother. She had said to her mother: "you favored sons and despised daughters, and now your daughters are the only ones that can be relied on to look after you in sickness." Not wanting her daughters to repeat her life, she was committed to further their education as much as possible, and had no plans to move unless for schooling reasons.

A much worse situation was that of interviewee #GY-27, who was living in a small space with no floors, walls, or furniture beneath a deafening train overpass. Like #GY-19, he was from rural Anshun, had lived in Guiyang for over ten years, and had both of his children in Guiyang. His wife first left, many years ago. His fifteen-year-old son also ran away from home and, at the time of the interview, had been gone for over

a year without contact; the eight-year-old daughter lived at school under the principal's charity. He was seriously ill with abscesses but could afford no healthcare and had no access to rural medical insurance and minimum security that was supposedly very widespread in China. There was no more land for him to farm back home. He was the only male interviewee who had never gone to school; growing up, he had little food and clothing. There were no options for him besides stay where he was and continue to pick up trash for a living.

Constraints notwithstanding, several interviewees also said that they preferred living in Guiyang to anywhere else not only for the ease of cultural navigation but also for its mild climate and natural beauty. This suggests that urban amenities factor into consideration for some people. The construction of the first subway line in 2018 was another welcome improvement in public transportation, and there will be many more lines to come. On the other hand, urban redevelopment is rapidly driving up housing prices, which could make things difficult for aspiring homeowners.

Anshun and Surrounding Areas

Anshun is a small prefecture about one-hour-drive away from Guiyang most known for its heritage sites and natural amenities. According to the newest data from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, Anshun has the best air quality among all cities in China. Geographically, it contains a small urban core of two urban districts with about half a million people and a vast expanse of counties, towns, townships, and villages with 1.8 million, which add up to a total population of 2.3 million for the entire prefecture. Slightly over a million people live in the greater metropolitan area – districts plus

surrounding counties and towns, making Anshun about 44% urbanized. Since only about half a million (15% of the entire population) has urban hukou, most people living in urban areas are rural migrants. In 2014, it was among the first batch of pilot cities for new urbanization to serve as an example for other mountain cities. First, urban residents were reclassified according to whether they are incorporated in urban basic infrastructure and services. Second, small towns and villages were heavily targeted so that growth in the urban core can be spread and diffused. The city aims to transfer more rural people into non-agricultural occupations in industrial parks, agritourist villages, and boarding trade schools. In fact, the only two towns designated as national "characteristic towns" (those identified as having one or more robust industries) in Guizhou are found in Anshun. In the current development policy, there are two main points of emphasis: one is on the interconnectivities among the targeted towns and villages in the Guian New Area so that they all prosper together; the other is the necessity of moving people out of the isolated locations in mountains into more accessible places.

For the past decade or so, Anshun has been going through a construction boom aided by a double-digit annual GDP growth, which attracted many rural migrants from both within and outside the province. In fact, Anshun has a much higher proportion of interprovincial migrants (about 1 in 3) than Guiyang (about 1 in 5). I interviewed five labor contractors who were themselves rural migrants and worked extensively with migrants. Three of them had completed five years of schooling, started from manual labor, transitioned into the construction and renovation sector, and moved up the ranks. Two of them had gained industry experience in more developed provinces before

relocating to Anshun to take advantage of the opportunities in a rapidly growing but yet uncompetitive city; one is from Zhejiang originally and had completed nine years of compulsory education, and the other from a rural county in Guizhou and had gone to college. All were males in their 30s and 40s, married with children, and local homeowners.

They talked to me about their own migration journeys as well as experiences recruiting and working with other migrant laborers. One of the recurring themes in our conversations was the difference between local and interprovincial workers. The latter was much more preferred by employers because they typically had more skill and education, showed greater commitment, and had better work ethic. The general comment by all interviewees was: "Local workers are lazy and laid back. Every other day, they would take a day off to attend some family or social event in their village or if someone in their family got sick. This makes them very unreliable. By contrast, workers from other provinces are far away from home and not distracted by these things. The only good thing about local workers is that you do not have to supply housing for those who live within commutable distances." (multiple interviews: July 2017). Additionally, the experiences of interviewees #AS-01 and #AS-03, who had worked construction projects in eastern cities, had their own trans-provincial networks of laborers that they brought to Anshun. They themselves had always followed their bosses to wherever projects were. As a result, they also preferred workers that had stuck with them in the past to local workers in Anshun. A small percentage of the interprovincial workers brought their families with them and enrolled their children in peri-urban rural

schools, which, based on my interviews with school administrators, was adding to the stress on public school facilities.

Elsewhere in the greater Anshun, there is a scattered pattern of urbanization along main highway connecting Anshun and Guiyang, which emerged with the creation of Guian New Area in 2013. Toward the Guiyang end, "The Big Three" of ICT – China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecommunications Corporation – have constructed offices, apartments, and warehouses for servers in a designated zone for big data and cloud computing. Toward the Anshun end, there is a string of agritourist villages with farms and restaurants, ecological parks that experiment with new methods of farming, tiny towns modeled after foreign countries with high-end shops, offices for technological start-ups and e-commerce platforms for local agricultural products, and the more traditional small-town industrial zones and farming villages that were there before. In 2016, the village of Tangyue in Pingba district of Anshun achieved national fame for eliminating poverty with minimal outside assistance and provoked intense debates about whether the model could be exported. Nowadays it is run more like a corporation with extremely strict rules for controlling the behaviors of local leaders. The village also has its own construction and transport companies.

These projects of local urbanization have, for better or worse, brought real changes to local people's livelihoods and attracted a few outsiders. Occupational transitions change migration patterns and family arrangements to some degree. For example, according to my interview with a village leader and representative in National People's Congress, people in her village are having fewer children because they no longer feel as pressed to produce sons, since girls and young women can now get non-

agricultural jobs like receptionist or server in nearby tourist establishments that pay ten times more than farming (Interview #PB-09: July 9th, 2017). Some people gained new knowledge in business operations after transitioning into the tourism industry. In addition to job creation, the government is also investing in school infrastructure in these locations, expanding campuses and adding dormitories, which are free of charge for students living a distance away. I encountered a group of parents waiting outside one such school for their children to finish taking the entrance exams. If they pass, the parents plan on moving out of their home villages to try to find work in factories near the school or else commuting (Interview #PB-06).

For the most part, however, places in more peripheral parts of the new area barely felt anything at all. In a village at the very edge, about half of the young people had gone out to work, and this has not changed because of the new area. The entire village was resettled about ten years ago from deeper in the mountains to its current location which could be reached by motor vehicles via a dirt road. Two extended families that I interviewed with multiple adult members working or having worked in the eastern provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian had remarkably similar narratives. The women in both families never went to school, but they had relatives in the city, and they went there with their husbands who did for at least six years. Their decision to return had nothing to do with what was going on elsewhere in the county/district; they came back because they had earned enough money to build a house back home (government subsidy for relocation was not close to cover the cost). Having lost most of their farmland to reforestation, one of the families (#interview PB-16) was living on savings and meager earnings from selling ginger, not even taking advantage of a 50,000 yuan

of poverty assistance from the government because of the many strings attached, while the other (#PB-17) started a home business that was not particularly lucrative. Both had future plans to find better employment without going far from home for the sake of their children but acknowledged that factory work nearby was scarce and competitive. #Interviewee PB-16 thought that going all the way to Guiyang just to do menial labor would not be much of an improvement on their current situation in the village.

Concluding Remarks

> "[P]eople are not migrating simply for their own benefit, but rather as part of a larger strategy for supporting and caring for their children, parents, spouses and extended kin, and for planning for their future family life." (Kilkey et al., 2018; Baldassar et al., 2018).

It is not possible to draw any kind of broad conclusions from a handful of narratives or generalize Guizhou's situation to other western provinces – and certainly not the rest of the country. These stories revealed the urbanization process through ordinary people's perceptions and lived experiences. They demonstrated how inequality within and beyond the province is carried over in the process of rural-urban migration and replicated/reproduced in the city At the household level, however, many experiences are comparable across different contexts – place-specific structural factors reduced to their individual components as defined by their impact on individuals and families.

Guizhou province is very much like a small developing country that has historically supplied raw materials and low-cost workers to advanced regions and recently received massive external aid to develop some of the more promising peripheral regions, while its primate city continues to bear the brunt of the migration pressures from displaced people from the most impoverished areas. While hope for future prosperity resonates in the policy documents, migrants experience real struggles and persist everyday despite lack of healthcare, poor housing conditions, and sometimes mountains of debts from failed business endeavors.

Those who came out of the toughest areas recounted childhood memories of trudging for hours along hazardous mountain trails to the nearest school, carrying a small saucepan, a handful of raw rice, some yellow beans, chili peppers, and a chunk of lard – provisions that were supposed to last a week. After a short time, girls usually gave up, then a few more years later, boys as well. As teens, they came to Guiyang to find work, started families, and have lived there ever since. As frustrating as some were about not being able to enroll children in public schools, the alternative of subjecting them to the same ordeal as they had experienced was unthinkable.

For them, Guiyang is home. Without sufficient money, information, education, skill, and connections, it would be a great struggle and risk to seek jobs in small towns or venture beyond the provincial border. These migrants have strong intention to settle down in Guiyang not so much because they are well-established or incorporated but because they have few other options. Besides a couple of empirical studies showing the negative correlation between urban settlement and the acreage of rural landholdings as

an indicator of rural ties (e.g. Tao et al., 2015), this dynamic is rarely acknowledged in case studies of mega-cities (e.g. Fan, 2011).

Much of the provincial and local leaders' energy is dedicated to wrestling with poverty and underdevelopment. The hasty implementation of the household responsibility system in the 1980s caused agricultural devastation. Now, many farmlands have been reclaimed for reforestation. This has cut off what few resources migrants have in their home villages. If developmental efforts have not had effect, it certainly is not the lack of trying. Everywhere in the populated parts of the province is a flurry of developmental activities. What used to be a bald hill with a few farmhouses surrounded by stretches of crops and grasses is now a bustling central business district with high-rises and shopping malls. While I was in the field, there was, in one county, a construction project of such immense scale that all traffic through it had to be rerouted to go around. However, the actions quickly taper off the farther one gets from major urban areas, until no sign of development remains but red banners that read: "latecomer advantage shall propel us to the front!". Because diffused development is costly, resources can only be concentrated on a few choice spots. The idea is for these to become nodes from which growth will spread out, but as of now – six years into these projects, places as close as thirty-minute drive away remain largely unaffected. Moreover, economic development projects like data centers are especially poor at creating new local jobs.

As of 2019, the provincial government has completed the bulk of the gargantuan task of relocating 1.88 million people out of the unforgiving depths of mountains into more hospitable areas, where they will receive new apartment housing, sufficient

income, and job training. It is not yet known if and how this will affect outgoing migrant members of these relocated families. So far, despite the visible progress in both urban and rural areas of the province, many city migrants find themselves in a gap that is not being adequately addressed in policy. New opportunities that have been created appear to be seized by only those who have the skills and resources to be mobile and those who were there before.

CHAPTER 5

MIGRANT CHILDREN

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the exclusion of migrant children from public education in Guiyang. The previous chapter showed that the informal settlements in the city are filled with migrants in a precarious situation. Many of those without documentation of residence or social security payments are barred from sending their children to public schools. Yet according to a recent study, cities in Guizhou are *the* friendliest to migrant children in the China (Chan and Ren, 2018) – a conclusion based on tabulating the ratio of migrant children versus left-behind children generated by policy exclusions. At the same time, in Guiyang, about one-third of migrant children have no access to public schools – about 12 percentage point higher than the national average. Clearly, in this case, "friendliness" does not translate to more inclusiveness, but rather greater tolerance and acceptance for low-cost private schools that cater to migrants.

Such "informal" schools are an increasingly common phenomenon in developing countries under the global trend of privatization and state retreat from welfare and service provision. They mostly serve children of low-income households living in deprived neighborhoods such as slums and peripheral settlements (Archambault, 2012; Harma, 2019). In China, low-cost private schools are also commonly known as migrant schools, and the terminology reflects exclusion based solely on designated "outsider" status. Two questions dominate the discussion in

research and policy regarding these schools – whether they should be allowed at all as a reasonable substitute for state schools, and if so, how they should be regulated by the government to ensure adequate quality. Previous studies have focused on either educational outcomes or regulatory aspects, both revealing the inferiority of these schools and suggesting they may be more of a problem than a solution. I take a more humanistic approach by focusing on what goes on inside the schools and incorporating the views of principals, teachers, parents, and students, and in so doing uncover previously overlooked aspects of what these schools do for migrant families that public schools cannot in terms of community-building and urban adaptation.

Guiyang is by no means the only city in China that relies on migrant schools. Beijing at one point had more than 300 such schools, except most of these were not legal. To make matters worse, the government has since the early 2000s gone on aggressive campaigns to eliminate them. Guangzhou has all but formalized these schools in name with the amount of aid and regulation from the government and accepted them as alternatives to public schools. Generally speaking migrant schools are still more need-based than choice-based and a last resort. Governments typically lack the capacity to supervise and support them but also depend on them to fill the gap left by the under-funded, over-burdened public school system. In Guiyang's case, migrant schools are sustained by tuitions, meager and unpredictable government subsidies, and principals' personal savings. As most of migrants come from within the province, which contains large swaths of destitute rural areas, many of them cannot pay full tuition. Migrant schools in Guiyang almost exclusively serve this population since migrants from wealthier places are either able to find a way to gain entry to city public schools

or have the option to leave their children in decent rural schools. The consequence is that migrant schools cannot always fulfill their mission to provide adequate education.

In Guiyang, as is the case for other cities, there are no provisions specifically prohibiting migrant students from entering public schools. Admission is based on a priority list. Local students are guaranteed admission. Non-local students are required to provide as many of the following documents they can: residence permit, proof of address, social insurance payment for three years, labor contract/pay stub/business license for three years, and proof of non-violation of birth control policy. These are not weighed equally; for instance, housing purchase counts for the most. Having all of the documents does not guarantee admission, nor does having none preclude the possibility of admission. It depends on the spots available in the school and principals' discretion. Because the quality and reputation of schools varies widely and matter greatly, rent-seeking behaviors among principals are common. Altogether, new arrivals, transients, migrants without formal residence or employment, migrants from poor rural areas that rely on the security provided by a large number of children, and migrants without financial resources – people who are already disadvantaged – typically get the short end of the stick as far as schooling is concerned.

The dilemma is that while these schools are obviously problematic, their existence is what enables migrant families to settle down with their children and makes the city migrant-friendly. On the other hand, the state's tolerance for them can also serve to continue or even legitimate exclusionary practices without addressing the core issues. Sehgal (2005) cautions the celebration of self-help and community-based efforts as this can easily become justification for state retreat in providing for the social reproduction

of migrant workers. This chapter contends that these self-help efforts are better tailored to the needs of migrant families, although there are clear limits. Even if it were possible to remove migrant schools and move their students to public schools, migrant students have special needs that require dedicated attention.

Research on Informal Schooling

The existence of low-cost private schools is commonly attributed to the inability or unwillingness of governments in developing countries to provide public education to marginalized populations. Between the consideration of education as a universal human right (World Bank, 2018) and the inescapable reality of the lack of governmental capacity in low-income countries, questions are raised about whether low-cost private education can or should be a substitute and a complement to free public education, or whether the limited funds should be concentrated on the public or private sector, from both normative or outcome-oriented perspectives. As with other public services, a debate is emerging regarding schools about the benefits and harms of private providers – a counter-measure to state failures but highly vulnerable to market failures, with divergent conclusions about state involvement and policy implications for best forms of governance.

Studies from international contexts are consistent in their reports on the inferior physical environment of private schools, but differ in their assessments of disparity in outcomes. Other studies focus on regulatory problems. Baum et al. (2018) showed that while state regulation of low-fee private education is absolutely necessary for quality assurance, tightening the restrictions for market entry for these schools facilitates the

proliferation of the unofficial market, which the state has little control over the questionable practices. They recommend that instead of regulating the input of private schools such as teachers, resources, and facilities (which encourage substandard schools to go underground), governments should pay more attention to the outcomes or results of education and regulate accordingly. Looking at cases in Kenya, Edwards et al. (2017) argued that private schools do not function in practice as in theory, and there is no way to regulate them that can fully eliminate the negative externalities, implying that education should be entirely within the domain of the state. Harma (2019) offers a pessimistic account of state regulatory failures based on stakeholder narratives and suggests that the only way forward that is not wholesale condemnation of private schools (which likely causes the most harm to low-income students) is supporting spontaneous local efforts arisen out of the drive of people to get a better education. By contrast, Heyneman and Stern (2014) are optimistic about the ability of private schools to deliver by observing that some families actually choose private schools when presented with public alternatives. Focusing similarly on public choice, Oketch et al. (2010) argued that free primary education policy in Sub-Saharan Africa is not serving the needs of the poor, leading to the mushrooming of the private school market to fulfill consumer demand.

China's case is yet different, as licensed migrant schools must be non-profit, though actual practices vary. Unregulated schools can be a mixed bag of legitimate education providers and profiteering enterprises. The relationship between the local government and migrant schools vary among cities. Writing on cases in Beijing, where the government is notoriously unsympathetic to migrant children, Kwong (2004)

documents a number of strategies employed by migrant schools to stay afloat, including accommodation, avoidance, and resistance: “The migrant children schools are not collectively organized; the proprietors act on their own. Many schools have gone under, but those who continue operating have adopted ingenious proactive and reactive steps to procure support from both the government and civil society” (p. 1086). Goodburn (2009) attributes hostility to migrant children and migrant schools in Beijing to a shared perception of migrants by the state and urban locals as uncultured people who take up valuable city resources.

Schooling outcomes for migrants have broad societal consequences. The dualistic citizenship construct has created a large urban-rural disjuncture and likens internal migration in China to international migration. No summary, however detailed, could do justice to the voluminous valuable findings on segregation and assimilation from immigration studies. Suffice for the purpose of this chapter to mention a few key points. A host of individual, household, community, and larger structural factors affect assimilation outcomes; for children, experiences in schools have a decisive impact (Portes and Zhou, 1993). Schooling segregation by both race and socioeconomic status has been shown to produce negative outcomes for the affected students (Rumberger et al., 2005; Logan et al., 2012). School contexts matter greatly, particularly for disadvantaged students with fewer family resources, and these include curriculum, quality, social relationships, and student body composition (Hao and Pong, 2008; Hamnett et al. 2007).

Studies in China have consistently shown poor educational outcomes for migrant schools compared to either urban or rural public schools (Chen and Feng, 2013;

Lai et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017). However, there is little consensus on whether migrant schools overall "do more harm than good" in terms of expanding opportunities for migrant children and families, and hence no policy verdict on whether they should be shut down or receive increased support. In the absence of guaranteed access to public schools, they are indispensable for enabling migration and settlement as a family in the first place. Access to education and child supervision is one of the major practical considerations behind the decision to bring children to the city (Fan, 2011). Couples whose children are left behind in the village are unlikely to settle down in the city (Fan et al., 2011). Emotional attachment is also a factor in choosing to keep children close by – having family or children in the destination city is a form of sociocultural attachment that has been argued to contribute positively to settlement intention (Chen and Liu, 2016; Du and Li, 2012).

The availability of migrant schools means fewer left-behind children, who tend to grow up to be very disadvantaged in the labor market (Lyu and Chen, 2018; Wei, 2018). The decision to permanently settle as a family allows children to adapt to city life. Yuan et al. (2013) showed that migrant school students psychologically adapt to living in the cities just as well as migrant students in public schools. However, they also found that migrant schools are not conducive to sociocultural adaption; in fact, their students grow closer to their origin culture and more distant from their host culture over time (Yuan et al., 2013). Lu and Zhou (2011) found poorer achievement and more loneliness for migrant school students than for migrant students in public schools, and little to no difference between urban locals and migrants in public schools. These

findings suggest that schooling segregation, and perhaps even migrant schools themselves, needs to be placed under greater scrutiny.

The role of migrant schools as the sole cause of educational disparity and other disconcerting outcomes, however, has also been questioned. Liu et al. (2015), despite confirming that students in migrant schools do worse in mathematics than migrant students in public schools, show that the parents' socioeconomic status play an even more prominent role in determining student performance. In a similar vein, Qian and Walker (2015) found that significant inequalities persist despite the government's investment in broadening educational opportunities for migrant students, indicating that other factors are at work in producing educational disparities. Wu (2010) showed that the effect of family background on educational attainment remains undiminished in the course of remarkable expansion in educational opportunities. These findings cast doubt on the seemingly obvious conclusion that institutional exclusion is at the root of poor integration outcomes. With that said, however, although removing school segregation would not solve the problem of educational inequality, it should be the first step.

Fieldwork

40 semi-structured interviews ranging from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours were conducted at or near seven schools with varying characteristics in Guiyang (Table 1) with respect to size, location, student body composition, and type. No two schools were located in the same neighborhood. As all interviews were conducted on-site, I was able to take notes and photographs on the physical conditions of the schools and the neighborhoods. Even though the public schools are larger than private schools in terms of student body size,

there is no a priori reason to expect that this would affect the analysis. Migrant schools in general are a lot smaller because lack of resources limits how much they can be scaled up as business operations.

Table 5.1 – List of schools interviewed

	Type	Location	Grade	% Migrant	Size
SCHOOL A	Private	Peripheral *chengzhongcun**	K-9	100% Migrant	450 Students
SCHOOL B**	Private	Central *chengzhongcun*	K-6	100% Migrant	320 Students
SCHOOL C	Private	Central *chengzhongcun*	K-6	100% Migrant	150 Students
SCHOOL D	Private	Peripheral *chengzhongcun*	K-6	100% Migrant	120 Students
SCHOOL E	Public	Urban CBD	7-12	30% Migrant	3000 Students
SCHOOL F	Public	Urban CBD	1-6	< 5% Migrant	1600 Students
SCHOOL G	Public	Urban residential	1-6	60% Migrant	1000 Students

***** *chengzhongcun* is the Chinese term for "village-in-the-city" – former rural villages engulfed by urban expansions

**School B was the only one that did not have a license.

The majority of the data collection was done in the four migrant schools in the city – code-named School A, B, C, and D. The principals and the teachers were the first to be interviewed in their offices. The questionnaire for principals consisted of questions about personal background, details of school operation, relationships with students, parents and teachers, as well as interactions with government departments. The teachers were asked mostly about their working conditions and personal interactions with student families. The migrant parents were either chosen randomly at school or introduced by the principals and teachers, and the interviews were conducted either at schools or in their homes. The questionnaires for parents were the most comprehensive and include

inquiries on personal background, work, family structure, migration history, housing, and children's education (including attempts to enroll children in public schools, attitude toward migrant schools, and opinions about exclusion and social rights). Some interviews were conducted in a group setting.

The three public schools with varying proportion of migrant students (which is inversely related to their reputation) were included for comparison. In addition to similar background questions, the principals were asked about how migrant children were accepted or rejected, and on what grounds. The teachers were asked about specific challenges they encountered when working with migrant students in their classes. School F, with just a handful of migrant students, is the most prestigious elementary school in the city. On the other hand, School E and G, with 1/3 and 2/3 of its student body composed of migrant students, respectively, are ranked relatively low among city schools.

Additional interviews were conducted with five local experts serving in different capacities: A provincial-level policymaker, a city-level official in the department of education who was also a retired high school principal, a director of a non-profit organization that worked with thousands of migrant students in the city to promote integration at the school level, a professor at a local university who has been researching migrant children's education in Guiyang for over a decade, and an education consultant with an extensive network of public and private school officials. Each person was interviewed twice – first in 2016 at the start of the fieldwork with a follow-up in 2017 toward the end of fieldwork. These interviews were more open-ended and structured

around each person's unique knowledge about the issue. Two of the experts also helped in facilitating communication in a few of the interview sessions.

The Government

In 2010, Guizhou's seven major cities had on average 36.56% of migrant children enrolled in migrant schools. The provincial capital Guiyang alone had 48.58%, which suggests that the faster the growth of a city, the more likely that education resources such as funding, space, teachers, and facilities run thin (Xiao, 2012). Over the past few years, Guiyang has made significant improvement in expanding admission of migrant children in public schools (down to 36.89% of migrant children enrolled in migrant schools in 2014, 34.75% in 2015, and 31.77% in 2016, according to government reports), but this was accomplished at the cost of stretching class sizes well beyond limit. As of 2016, there are approximately 170,000 migrant children in the city.

A 2013 policy document outlined more rigorous screening and licensing requirements for new private schools. While the government aims to raise the quality of private education for new institutions, existing migrant schools are allowed to continue as before. This is confirmed by the interviews with government officials: "The Guiyang government is supportive of private schools, even the low-end ones, and this support is actually growing, just that the funding isn't always guaranteed due to flaws in the implementation. Even though those below-standard migrant schools will eventually be phased out and eliminated, the government is still giving them money (at least 300-400 yuan per student) just to keep the schools open and their teachers paid for now. This is how desperately the government depends on them." (Interview 21 June

2017) However, based on interviews with principals, this small amount of money does not always reach the schools.

The government's two-pronged strategy of expanding public schools and phasing out low-end migrant schools is running into numerous practical difficulties. In addition to fiscal limitations, the city's mountainous geography restricts the amount of available land and the choice of location for new construction. Building new schools would also have been easier if the migrants were concentrated on urban peripheries as is the case for many cities, but Guiyang's migrant settlements are too scattered for land to be allocated efficiently (Interview 8 July 2016). One way is to expand existing schools near migrant settlements, but extra land is difficult to come by in the middle of the city. Hence the importance of migrant schools is unlikely to diminish in the coming years with continued in-migration.

The Schools

The main explanations for the inferior quality of informal schools in general boil down to a lack of funding and regulation. The conditions of migrant schools in Guiyang are particularly abysmal as a result of the small amount of financial support that the government is able to provide and the poor financial situations of intraprovincial migrant families. The many problems of the schools apparent to observers, however, belie the special functions and resources they provide for student families. Without romanticizing, migrant schools offer a degree of flexibility in terms of school hours, tuition payments, and community engagement that would be unthinkable for public

schools; teachers are attentive to student needs; principals and proprietors are resilient and adamant in their resolution to keep their schools open.

Relatively unburdened by rules and regulations, migrant school operations are often shaped by negotiations between the principals and parents. The flexibility in school hours suits migrants, who typically work long hours or far from home. All four migrant schools had at least one person – a teacher or a cook – who supervised children after school and even overnight, despite significant legal risks. As a result, some parents falsify the age of their four-year-old in order to get them enrolled just so they will be cared for.

Another aspect of flexibility is displayed in the principals' tolerance for delayed tuition payments. Migrant schools in Guiyang typically charge 600-800 yuan for per-semester tuition. This is affordable for most steadily working households, but some experience difficulties due to precarious employment situations or a large number of children. About 30 to 40 out of 120 students at School D owed school tuition. The principal knew that a few families had absolutely no money to spare now or in the near future, and he did not expect them to ever repay the debt, but he could not bear the thought of expelling the students. The only bargain he held against these families was refusing to admit additional siblings. Teachers made frequent home visits not just to check up on students' well-being, but also to convince the parents to pay as early as possible, negotiate a schedule, and secure verbal confirmation. Frequent personal interactions such as these also help establish familiarity and support community-building. The interactions between the teachers and students are closer and more personal. The teachers reported that they sometimes bought meals for students if there

was no one to cook for them and walked them home on rainy days to make sure they got there safely.

Even parents who were actively trying to transfer their children to a public school in fact had few complaints about their current school. Their frustration was with being excluded and rejected from public schools, not with migrant schools themselves. One mother said that while she had all the documents required to enroll her daughter in a public school, she was dismayed by the rude treatment from the teachers. In the end, she chose to transfer her daughter to School B, an unlicensed migrant school, after seeing her six-year-old child in tears after her brief experience in the public school: " Those teachers at that public school treat us like second-class. They look down on my daughter because she hadn't learned as much as city kids. Here, [at School B], the teachers treat us with respect and listen to our opinions. They are genuinely concerned with my child's well-being. Even though this school cannot compare with public schools in terms of physical conditions, my daughter is happy here. And if she can learn here, there is really no point in enrolling her in a public school." (Interview 5 July 2016)

The principals of migrant schools also viewed themselves as part of the migrant community, but with the knowledge and expertise in education to fulfill an important purpose and mission. They characterized their determination to run migrant schools as mostly altruistic and fought to keep their schools open despite significant financial losses and personal sacrifices. The principal of School D was over 70 years old. When asked why he decided to open a migrant school in retirement, he replied: "As an educator, seeing children running around, picking up trash for money, when they should be in school, but there are just no schools for them in this city. I found when I was

helping conduct a district-wide survey that about 3000 migrant kids were out of school and wandering in the streets. So, I convinced some of my friends to go in the business with me, and together we are able to solve some of their schooling problems." (Interview 10 July 2017) At the edge of the city where the majority of the migrants were illiterate and earned a living by picking up trash and cleaning riverbeds, he waived tuition for a third of his students. He also used to bring rice and oil frequently to some families but stopped when he discovered that the parents sold these to purchase alcohol. He sought out charities in the city to donate clothes and bookbags and offered beds and hot showers for eight students whose homes were unlivable. The boarders, supervised by an elderly woman, appeared well cared-for and content at the time of my visit.

Finally, migrant schools are a space for civil society involvement and intervention targeted at migrant populations. In an interview, the director of the local NGO previously mentioned – one that works with migrant schools to provide extra teaching support – had tried to collaborate with public schools that had high percentages of migrant students to offer extracurricular programs. However, its attempts were futile because public schools had such strict regulations about class hours, use of facilities, and campus safety that any involvement of outside organizations was out of the question. School G has a special program for migrant students that involves volunteers, but it was fully sponsored by the government. For migrant schools, however, once the principals were convinced of the value and purpose of his projects, they had the freedom to offer programs such as afterschool tutoring, art and music lessons on Fridays, training classes for teachers, and counseling sessions for parents.

These aspects of migrant schools contribute to positive experiences for migrant families, and children's happiness with their school discourages the parents from wanting to transfer their children. When asked about future plans to move, the parents replied along the lines of "waiting until the children finish school here first" (multiple interviews). In other words, migrant schools are the anchor around which other plans are made and a place for developing community ties and sense of belonging.

However, there are limitations to the extent that communities can function without the aid of the state. While government funding is promised to migrant schools, it is not always delivered. The principal of School C said that government funding made a negligible difference in her budgeting, while the principal of School D had not seen any funding for two years when his school was supposed to be entitled to an annual 300 RMB per student. On top of that, with many student families unable to pay tuition, school principals have no choice but to cut costs at every opportunity including repairs, equipment, and staff salaries. The most visible inadequacy of migrant schools as a result of low funding is the depraved physical conditions. The migrant schools in this study shared the commonalities of dimly-lit, over-crowded classrooms and tiny outdoor spaces for exercise. For example, at school C, because the classes took place in irregularly oblong spaces, students in the back, many of whom appeared eager to participate, frequently complained that they could not hear the teachers over the constant ruckus in the front of the classroom. Classrooms were also missing modern technologies such as computers and projectors. Neighborhood conditions were also poor as public services such as waste management were lacking.

The impact of inadequate regulation is reflected in staffing and management. Qualified and certified teachers are in short supply even for the city's public schools. Teachers in migrant schools interviewed in this study are either elderly retirees or young graduates transitioning to a better job. Young teachers are inexperienced and "flighty" – leaving the job as soon as something else becomes available, sometimes mid-semester. While public school teachers anywhere in the country are required to go through rigorous training and pass standardized examinations, migrant school principals hire anyone willing to accept low wages, no benefits, and a heavy workload (Friedman, 2017). There are often no written contracts. The principal of School C made the teachers vouch for families using their own wages and withheld the teachers' wages the students paid tuition, which is of course unfair to the teachers. Working under harsh conditions, some teachers act irresponsibly in matters relating to their students' academic progress. For example, they give passing grades for failing performances to cover up any problems with learning and to avoid dealing with complaints from parents (Interview 6 July 2017).

Finally, while migrant schools are largely tolerated by the Guiyang government, they are still at constant risk of closure. School C and its neighborhood are fortunately protected from urban redevelopment by an old, difficult-to-move cemetery and crematorium. The principal at the time of the interview, however, was engaged in a battle with a neighboring landowner whose new unit construction was infringing on her already small school spaces. The local government refused to intervene on her behalf because she was only a renter. School B, after 11 years of operating legally, lost its license when it was rezoned into a different city district during city expansion. The new

district-level department of education has been ignoring the principal's repeated applications for a new license for the past four years. To this day, the 320 students who attend the school do not receive official certification of study progress, which means that they cannot transfer to public school or advance to secondary schools. The principal of School D has relocated his school twice in the past ten years due to urban redevelopment – each time closer to the city periphery, in the process losing about two-thirds of his students. Because he rented his school building from landowners in the urban villages, he only received meager compensation for the second relocation and none for the first. Running out of funds, he has remained determined to keep his school open for as long as possible with personal savings, income from retirement, and loans. This did mean that costs needed to be cut down.

The Families

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of the parents interviewed at migrant schools reported between 0 to 5 years of schooling. Most of them migrated out of necessity because they could no longer subsist on farming and had to bring their children along to spare them the harsh life back home. Several extended families including the elderly and siblings have entirely uprooted from their villages and have no plans to return, so there would not have been anyone to care for left-behind children in any case. Their lands were underproductive and had been reclaimed by the provincial government for reforestation and ecological restoration. Even though these migrants are referred to as rural, in reality, they are no longer connected to their agricultural lifeline. This profile of migrant school attendees was also confirmed by other interviewees.

Low education attainment and high rates of illiteracy are common among these migrants and severely limit their employment and housing options. Not being able to produce the proper documents that show at least three years of employment and residence contract, a valid business license, and social security payments – in addition to violating the birth control policy – gives public school principals a valid reason for denying admission (according to interview with the principal of School E, 7 July 2016). These requirements are stringent for many migrants in Guiyang because they simply could not be met. Ostensibly, the requirements are about length of residence, and planning officials in China often justify their policies by making a distinction between temporary or floating populations and long-term residents. And yet, based on a poll conducted at School C, out of the 109 students from grade 3 to 6, 89 of them have lived in Guiyang for more than three years, 47 have for more than 7 years, and 23 were born in Guiyang, but their parents are not any closer now to accruing the required documents than when they first arrived.

Many of the interviewed parents had repeatedly tried to enroll their children in public schools and failed; others never tried because they expected to fail; and still others had never bothered finding out about it because they thought the process was unfathomable and fraught with challenges. A parent interviewed at School B conveyed his frustration with the process: “I have three children, no siblings to help me, and two parents over 80 that need me. I spend a lot on housing but don’t have a housing contract, so I get turned away from public schools every time. A friend from my hometown killed himself last year because a public school wouldn’t admit his son because of bad grades – it was just an excuse to keep out migrants like us.” (Interview: 5 July 2016)

Several other interviewed parents also cited their children's poor grades as a deterrent from making the attempt at gaining access to public schools, while school officials adamantly denied rejecting students on the basis of grades. What is certain is that principals of public schools wield considerable power over admission. The existing policy allows principals to deny migrants admission for fear of lowering school ranking or dealing with "problem" students. Teachers' salaries are also affected by student test scores. In a few cases, even if a migrant is able to supply all the required paperwork for public schools, principals can still deny admission by filling the spots with local students who have better grades, parental connections, or can pay arbitrary fees (Interview 5 July 2016). Such was the case in School F, where poor migrants had virtually no chance of being admitted even if they lived nearby. In times when crackdowns on such corruption are less severe, the spots within a school that should have been left for migrant students are frequently "bought up" by people with means (see endnote for more detailed explanation). Some of these people with means are migrants, but their situation is not commonplace, especially among rural migrants.

Scholars have suggested that the effect of socioeconomic status of migrant families might outweigh the effects of exclusionary policies in causing educational disparities. This chapter finds that while between-group socioeconomic differences do cross the schooling barrier, but they also interact with segregation and exclusion to reinforce stratification in more ways than one. For starters, a student's socioeconomic status affects his or her chances of gaining entry to public schools. Families with enough financial resources can overcome hukou restrictions by purchasing properties near good schools. Secondly, if schooling decisions are considered as choices instead of

constraints, one can make inferences about parental goals and expectations via their choice of schools. For instance, because of the poor quality of migrant schools and the fact that migrant students cannot take college entrance exams, parents who have high hopes for their children's future would rather send them back to the village to be educated at rural public schools, which have improved in recent years, even if it means giving up their city jobs or splitting up the family. By contrast, parents who are content with sending their children to migrant schools without making any effort to get them out may not have as high expectations in terms of educational attainment.

The lack of parental supervision is common among migrant families, but in most cases it is compelled by circumstances such as long working hours rather than willful neglect. Nevertheless, it is still a major complaint among teachers in both migrant and public schools. The extent of it might be greater for migrant schools, possibly because there are fewer rules mandating parental involvement. According to the principal of School C: "Most of the parents are out working all day and have barely any time to supervise their children. I still haven't met or spoken to the parents of a few students who have been going here for several years. The children brought the tuition and registration forms themselves, and their parents stay completely off the grid… I'd say about 30% of the parents actually care about how their kids do in school." (Interview 9 June 2017)

This roughly 1/3 of parents concerned with their children's academic progress was also cited separately by the principals of Schools A and D. The permissiveness of migrant schools places more responsibility on individual parents to choose their level of involvement and attentiveness. In this way, a student's academic progress is more

dependent on the parents' personal attitudes, values, and beliefs about the importance of education. Some parents were actively involved and met with teachers frequently, while others did not seem at all appreciative of education's importance, or they wished to be more involved but lacked the ability to read and understand their children's homework assignments or communicate effectively with the teachers. They did not know to intervene when their children were falling behind, especially if the teachers did not press the issue, as was often the case.

The teachers said that the lack of support at home, as well as the unreasonable expectation of some parents that the teachers were entirely responsible for their children, made their job more frustrating and drained their motivation. In public schools, migrant students were described as a particularly difficult group. Their levels of achievement varied: some students were independent self-starters, while others had low motivation. Even for the driven students, however, their parents are less likely than their urban counterparts to be able to afford after-school or extracurricular pursuits. Public schools offer many more free programs, which their migrant students may have access to. Migrant school students, by comparison, enjoy no such privilege; their exposure to cultural activities and sports is conditional on the sponsorship of private actors. Most migrant schools do not have such support from the civil society. The educators interviewed agreed that migrant students on average require more attention from the school to meet their unique educational and psychological needs, which currently both public schools and migrant schools provide (in different capacities) insufficiently.

Concluding Remarks

Insofar as they are able to operate without disruption, migrant schools are an anchor for social life and promote settlement, stability, and community-building. The children I interacted with expressed strong attachment to their schools, teachers, and classmates. There is little discrimination in migrant schools. Teachers have a closer relationship with their students through frequently visiting student homes to obtain tuition payment and having to take on extra supervision of children when their parents are at work. Principals are flexible about tuition payments. These schools have provided the opportunity for families to stay together in the city, but they evince a devil's bargain: The poor educational quality could undermine the future success of migrant children. Both factors are related to the interior city's economic and developmental circumstances. The government is able to allocate only limited financial support (which often fails to make it to the hands of principals) and tolerates lower standards. Students come some of the most destitute villages in the country, and the inability of many families to pay full tuition on time further restricts school funds. Even if the conditions of migrant schools were to improve in the future, the students attending them would still be socially and culturally segregated from their counterparts in public schools and urban locals.

Migrant schools do not only serve urban transients who float from city to city, but also long-term (migrant) residents who have not been incorporated into the formal economy or formal housing market. The latter group of migrants is excluded from public education due to the inability to produce the necessary paperwork, violation of birth control policy, and/or lack of knowledge about navigating the process – all of which have little to do with their length of residence in the city. Therefore, the popular

justification for the exclusion of the floating population based on their ephemeral contribution to the city's economy does not hold for this group of migrants. Their exclusion reflects the fundamental logic in China's urban citizenship that dislocates institutional space (where migrants receive services) from the geographical space (where migrants live).

From a policy standpoint, since migrant schools fulfill a critical demand in the urbanizing city, shutting them down in one sweep would not work. If nothing is done, they will continue to attract more families to a city that is already struggling to provide – leading to a pattern of persistent segregation. Migrant schools may have started out as a quick patch to the crisis of urbanization, but they have since evolved into an important co-producer of urban services for and alongside of the state. Policies concerning them need to be carefully considered – whether they should be regulated, formalized, or closed. Based on the findings in this study about some of the more nuanced roles that migrant schools fulfill, local policies should focus on supporting migrant schools or relevant non-profit organization at the same time as increasing capacity in public schools. At the provincial level, resource allocation mechanisms can stand to be improved to make sure that funding follows the migrant student from origin to destination as he or she moves to the city. Whether or not the private sector can successfully fill the gap, migrant children have special needs and face greater challenges in life, and should therefore not be ignored.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation research was motivated by profound changes in China's rural-urban migration dynamics entering the twenty-first century and the deep impacts of policies that could determine the fate of future generations. Rarely do we get to observe how the urbanization of millions in a country with a transitioning economy and one-party state unfolds. As many have argued, so far the Chinese government has relied on a mostly unsustainable form of urbanization – one important aspect of which is the exclusion of rural migrants from equal opportunities in the city. Even formally-employed migrant workers in regulated industries are often denied various rights and services on the basis of their non-local hukou status. By interfering so heavy-handedly in the market, the state has in fact accommodated it by creating a large supply of low-cost and exploitable labor. The household registration system not only instigated massive inequalities on its own but also reinforced new ones that emerged from market processes.

Nevertheless, opportunities abound in a country where reforms are frequent and speedy. Not thirty years have passed since the creation of a private housing market accessible to virtually anyone with the financial means and a revamped social security system that now extends to rural residents and non-state employees. As cities grew, more doors opened. At the same time, we continue to see large segments of the migrant population living on the margins and working long hours for little money, constantly thwarted by all the hoops they must jump through to obtain the most basic services for themselves and their families. The central government, being reluctant to abolish the

hukou system, resorts to making incremental changes that have insignificant effect and leave loopholes for some of the more powerful local governments to exercise arbitrary exclusions. Improving the rights of rural migrants has always been on the table, but there has yet been any truly transformative action. The New Urbanization Plan, the first major policy document that explicitly addresses sustainable urban development, simply outlines ways to redirect migration flows instead of addressing the fundamental inequities in current system of urban management. Hukou restrictions are only lifted in places where they hardly matter, while the establishment of point-based systems in large cities divide migrants into tiers of welfare citizens based on their perceived "merits".

The intention of this dissertation is to understand more about China's recent urbanization experience at the household level and to identify individual and contextual factors that shape migration decisions and enable some to do better than others. The interplay of these factors is complicated. Traditional theoretical frameworks for rural-urban migration such as the Harris-Todaro model predict that rising unemployment levels and living costs should be enough to "choke off" city growth (Harris-Todaro, 1970; Fields, 1982; Brueckner and Zenou, 1999). Empirical observations showed that the story is not quite so simple. Economic considerations, while important, often do not constitute the entire basis for migration decisions. Influenced by sociological research on international immigration, there emerged a scholarly tradition to view internal migration as essentially the same process as immigration, only without the involvement of nation-state border patrol, rather than something fundamentally different. Research in urban studies on citizenship fragmentation and exclusionary growth echoes this scholarship. Consequently, theories of assimilation gained favor in the study of internal

migration, especially in countries like China where there exists formal institutions regulating local citizenship. Empirical studies on migration decisions began to cover a wider-ranging set of variables such as life-cycle factors, access to public services, non-economic considerations for dependent family members such as children, and the impact of rural displacement due to developmental programs or climate change (Brueckner and Lall, 2015). Studies on migration outcomes also began to include more longer-horizon variables such as homeownership, settlement intention, integration, and intergenerational mobility or stratification.

Informed by this framework, I set out to look into what matters when migrants try to build a life in the city. Each empirical chapter presents a piece of the puzzle through its findings. Chapter 3, for example, shows that having social security, keeping the family together, and moving within the province are associated with higher likelihood of housing ownership, suggesting indirectly that interior cities might be more realistic option for nearby migrants to achieve upward residential mobility. At the same time, these cities also have weaker public services that may undermine integration. Chapter 4 shows that migrant families in the provincial capital of Guizhou are not going anywhere else even though life is very harsh. They brought their children along to spare them of the abysmal rural conditions and give them a better future in the city. Peripheral development in the surrounding areas benefit the locals to some extent but generates few jobs for laborers from elsewhere in the province. Improvement in transportation and communications technology makes it easier to look around for jobs, which could contribute to increased migration to cities that offer them. Chapter 5 illustrates how the openness of the provincial city toward migrant children comes at the expense of relying

on private schools. While these schools work for migrants in many ways and keep them anchored in the city, the educational outcomes suffer due to severe lack of funding.

One major emphasis of this dissertation, as evident in the research design and analysis, is the geography of migration in China. A combination of geographical advantages and supportive policies propelled some cities to massive size as well as national and global prominence. These are concentrated along the east coast. Cities in the interior, having grown at a more moderate pace if at all, are typically much smaller. The movement of people from the less developed interior to the more advanced coast resulted from and further contributed to widening regional disparity. Furthermore, because internal migration is so critical to shaping city demographics, inequality at the regional level is manifested in inequality at the local level. The NUP is meant to address this. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, its crux is entirely about the spatial redistribution of resources and people. The plan does not simply suggest speeding up urbanization to maintain economic growth, but it also proposes a more dispersed form of urbanization through the creation of city-region clusters throughout the country, development of small towns, and rural-to-urban hukou conversions in low-tier cities. By ordering large cities to maintain their hukou restrictions and control population growth, any prospective increase in official or unofficial urban population has to be absorbed elsewhere. The growth of secondary cities could even attract migrants from primary cities, thereby reducing the pressure there.

However, this projected "everybody wins" scenario is not exactly a transformative vision for greater egalitarianism. The total number of urban hukou-holders means relatively little when one considers how widely hukou benefits vary from

place to place. For example, this number can be raised by nominal conversions for local rural residents without substantial improvements in accessing benefit. In other words, the NUP is suggesting that people be directed to places where the cost of public provisions is much lower, so that it would be possible for more rural migrants to become officially registered urban citizens. These people would have to accept lower qualities of urban amenities, public transportation, and schools, if they could find employment in the much smaller pool of jobs.

Yet the potential of average cities for lifting rural migrants out of poverty has been revisited again and again. A mounting pile of evidence showed that under favorable circumstances and effective policies, these cities offer a better alternative than toiling in the unforgivingly competitive environment of mega-cities. The lower cost-of-living could contribute to increased savings which could go toward asset-building. Chapter 3 shows that homeownership among rural migrant households is much higher in central and western regions of China than the eastern region. This is most likely due to difference in affordability, but also to some extent whether migrants view the cities they live in as a stable home or "base of operation". This means that living in interior cities is a more accessible option. Less can be said, however, about the level of welfare benefits or quality of public services. For example, descriptive data shows that social security coverage is the lowest in the western region, granted that the discrepancy between migrants and urban locals is smaller. If interior cities do indeed provide a more hospitable environment for permanent migrants, it could be even more harmful in the long run to leave the inadequacy of social provisions unaddressed.

The case study of Guizhou gives concrete examples of what this kind of more permanent migration looks like. Having been largely neglected in developmental efforts until recently, the province is dealing the consequences of its underdevelopment on all fronts. Spatially, it has one large primate city (the provincial seat), myriad small cities, and almost no medium-sized cities. Many rural areas hidden away in the mountains are among the harshest and most deprived places in the world. Because their agricultural values are so low, the government has reclaimed much of the farmland for reforestation and moved large numbers of people out of these villages and resettling them in vacant land that offer little employment. Both poverty and poverty reduction efforts such as these have the effect of driving people into cities. The provincial capital is particularly attractive because it is large enough to offer a variety of jobs for all skill levels and not so large as to be unaffordable. For many migrants that I encountered, migrating to Guiyang seemed like the only sensible option. Not only that, staying in the city is just as necessary as moving there in the first place. What little land they have back home is not enough to sustain them, and there is nothing else for them back home. The difficult conditions also motivate migrants to bring their children with them. Studies have shown that the longer children stay in the city, the less likely parents will move away. For migrants with minimum schooling, leaving the province entails competing with other job-seekers who likely have had more education or training, navigating a culturally unfamiliar terrain, and possibly paying more for necessities while there.

The strong settlement intention that I observed among the migrants in Guiyang appeared to have little to do with formal integration. Certainly, having a decent job and house add to the incentive to continue living in the city, but they are not essential. Those

living in poor conditions with informal, low-paying, and difficult jobs – and little hope on the horizon for a positive change – were just as determined to stay, for all the reasons above. This dynamic is not evident in quantitative studies on settlement intention, which typically only test factors that might indicate "legitimate" ties to the city, such as high income, secure housing, formal employment, and a robust social network that includes a great number of local acquaintances. By contrast, my interviews revealed that what these migrants need to survive in the city is the wide availability of informal work, housing, and education – none of which are likely to show up as significant determinants for settlement intention. This suggests a need to re-examine the connection between settlement and integration. From the research angle, longer duration of stay does not always lead to more access to citizenship benefits. From the policy angle, excluding migrants does not always deter long-term migration. It depends crucially on the context of the migration system – conditions in the rural areas, conditions in the cities, and the linkages between the origins and destinations.

More research is required to determine whether the case of Guizhou may be generalizable to other large prefectures and primate cities in underdeveloped provinces that attract mostly destitute or displaced intraprovincial migrants and have relatively little power and means to provide for them or turn them away. The retreat of state leaves more room for migrants to exercise their agency, and informal activities are likely to become difficult to control. This in turn could fuel more migration. Without state support and incorporation, some migrants are likely to be trapped in persistent poverty. Daily existence revolves around sustenance and survival rather than socioeconomic advancement. Lacking in resources – financial and otherwise, individuals and

households cannot become footloose and mobile enough to be able to seek opportunities by moving around. As sites of permanent migration, these cities cannot deflect the problems of poverty, inequality, and exclusion by expelling migrants. Of course, further comparative research over a long period of time is needed to either confirm or refute this speculation.

Places like Guiyang are not the usual choice for studying migrants because their numbers are few compared to mega-cities. It is possible that there are different dynamics in play that have been missed. Earlier studies in Beijing and other cities of similar scale characterize migrants as largely non-permanent, well-connected to their rural origins (via landholdings, farm and business endeavors, and split household arrangements), ambitious for surplus economic gains, and intent on staying only for the sake of their "labor market and social futures" (Fan, 2011: p. 12). Indeed, many young people from those relatively well-off villages in Guizhou, where finishing junior high school is the norm, are working in coastal cities until their marriage, child and elderly care duties, retirement, or other economic opportunities bring them back. If they are unable to get their children in city public schools, enrolling them in rural schools in their home village is not the greatest tragedy. By contrast, those from the worse-off villages, having grown up with little to no access to even the most basic education, have much few options besides moving to the nearest large city and staying there for as long as possible. These people and their descendants are permanent city dwellers who would benefit immensely from even a little government assistance.

Based on the findings from mega-cities where a random sample likely contains more of the first kind of migrants, some scholars have concluded that China represents

a deviation from the permanent migration paradigm that explains urbanization in other countries without such a thing as the household registration system. Migrants "straddle and circulate between rural and urban areas" (Chen and Fan, 2016; p. 9) because without the ability to obtain hukou in large cities and incentive to obtain hukou in small and medium-sized cities, their rural hukou status is important as a safeguard (Chen and Fan, 2016). For migrants with substantial rural connections, it makes sense to keep one foot in the countryside. The hesitation to commit wholly to living in the city is just what NUP was designed to address. This model of urbanization does not account for the experiences of the migrant families in Guiyang that I had the privilege to learn. Those people and their descendants are permanent city dwellers who are being overlooked in research and neglected in policy and planning. For this reason, I argue that just because Guiyang does not have as many people does not mean the stakes there are lower. If anything, there will be many more cities like it in the near future.

China has always been a unique case in the human aspects of its urbanization policies. Not only does there exist an internal passport system that regulates population movement and legitimizes place-based exclusions, the state can implement and enforce it quite effectively. As a result, scholars have often used the term "incomplete" to describe the urbanization process, by which they mean either one or all of four observations or conditions: that rural migrants are 1) institutionally tied to villages via landholdings; 2) in the city temporarily with no intention of staying; 3) at constant risk of being forced out; 4) formally and legitimately denied the right to basic services while in the city. Through this dissertation research, however, the question of how unique China is needs to be revisited, because the case of Guizhou nullifies the first three

conditions: Migrants are landless and intent on staying; the government has no capacity to deny new entries or drive out existing residents. Even the fourth condition is becoming less valid as the hukou restrictions are increasingly subject to flexible enforcement. If the findings here are corroborated, the implication is that Chinese cities are more comparable to those in other developing countries that are experiencing rural-urban migration and urban exclusion than commonly believed – especially at the household level.

The limitations of this dissertation are mainly due to time and resource constraints in obtaining data. Using theoretical sampling of more interview participants based on place, migration trajectory, or occupational category could allow for more systematic comparison. Since migration spans multiple places, it would also have been worthwhile to trace back to the origins of the migrants I interviewed in Guiyang and find out if and why anyone stayed there. The practical difficulty is that those places are not easily accessible.

Going forward, there are several productive paths to move this research along that I believe are the relevant and timely. First, given that new developments are such an important and pervasive component of China's growth strategy, it is worth collecting systematic data on their impact, such as the number and kind of jobs generated, where the new workers come from, improvement (or the lack thereof) in social infrastructure, etc. My fieldwork in Guian New Area scratched the surface of some of these questions; with more investigation, this portion of the dissertation research could result in a whole separate project. These new developments often result in displacement and involuntary migration, which is another important but relatively under-studied topic. Among the

displaced population that could be of interest is the "reluctant" return migrants – people who have been forced to leave the eastern cities for their hometown as a result of recent wave of expulsions. So far what we have on these migrants are anecdotal accounts found in journalistic reports. Finally, if newer data is made available, one can investigate whether significant improvements in the geographical flexibility of social security and supply of affordable housing can make up for the shortcomings of the hukou system. In summary, a dynamic approach is needed to research China's urbanization as it relates to rural-urban migration – collecting multi-year data to infer causality, prioritizing paths and trajectories over single sites to understand relations among places, and untangling the bureaucratic knots to examine the processes of policy formulation and implementation.

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